WORLD/ A23

Battle over custody of her body keeps Nicole Smith in morgue 12 days after death

NEWS/ A2

AFP raises red alert in the runup to 21st Edsa I rites on Feb. 25

NEWS / A3

1,193 out of 2,333 pass docs' board exam; top 10 on Page A3; full list on www.inquirer.net

NEWS / A5

Recto brods feuding over Vilma's gov run

SPORTS / A25

Fiba lifts RP suspension finally

Britain withdraws its soldiers from Iraq

LONDON—BRITAIN WILL WITHDRAW AROUND 1,600 troops from Iraq over the coming months and aims to cut its 7,100 troop levels to below 5,000 by late summer—if local forces can secure the southern part of the country, Prime Minister Tony Blair said Wednesday.

British troops will remain in Iraq until at least 2008 and work to secure the Iran-Iraq border and maintain supply routes to US and coalition

BRITAIN/ A16

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
Thursday, February 22, 2007 ★★ 4 sections / Vol. 22 / No. 76 P18 website: www.inquirer.net

Drug firms' lobbyists thrown out of House

By Christian V. Esguerra

LAWMAKERS ARE FURIOUS OVER WHAT THEY call a brazen attempt by international pharmaceutical companies to block the passage of a bill seeking to reduce the prices of medicines in the country.

Four lobbyists from the Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Association of the Philippines

DRUG/ A6

UN blames military for political killings

GMA orders release of Melo report, ₱25M to CHR

ALSTON

Who is this man?

APART FROM BEING THE UNITED Nations' special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions, Australian Philip Alston is also a law professor at New York University, specializing in human rights law and the law of international organizations.

He is also the director of the NYU Center for Human Rights and Global Justice, and special adviser to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

WHO IS/ A17

By Fe Zamora

WHATEVER THE FIGURE, THE NUMBER OF KILLINGS of journalists and leftist activists in the Philippines is "distressing," and President Macapagal-Arroyo should persuade the Armed Forces to "acknowledge" the fact and conduct a "genuine" investigation, United Nations Special Rapporteur Philip Alston said yesterday.

Alston, who has just concluded a 10-day visit to "inquire into the phenomenon of extrajudicial executions," also said the President should make public the findings of the Melo Commission, which linked retired Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan and other military commanders to the killings.

Alston said he did not know exactly how many had died, but added:

"I am certain the number is high enough to be distressing.

"The impact of even a limited number of killings of the type alleged is corrosive in many ways."

While the President's directives in response to the Melo Report "constitute important first steps," he said, "a huge amount" of work needed to be done.

The human rights group Karapatan claims that more than 800 people, mostly leftist activists, had been mur-

UN BLAMES/ A17

AT A GLANCE

- Military "in state of almost total denial," must first acknowledge the problem.
- Evidence offered by military in support of CPP purge theory "especially unconvincing."
- Release Melo Report to the public.
- Strengthen accountability mechanisms and witness protection program.
- Respect law on party-list system.
- Reevaluate counterinsurgency program.

Defense, AFP silent on report; Gonzalez says Alston brainwashed

By Leila B. Salaverria,
Michael Lim Ubac
and Alcuin Papa

THE DEFENSE AND MILITARY ESTABLISHMENTS yesterday chose silence vis-á-vis the initial findings of United Nations Special Rapporteur Philip Alston, but Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez came out with guns blazing.

Gonzalez said Alston was closing his eyes to the purported atrocities committed by the Left, and expressed the belief that the latter had been brainwashed by leftist groups.

"Mr. Alston is in denial; he's in denial of the atrocities of the other side," the justice secretary told reporters when asked for comment.

"When you tell him, 'This is a taped message from (Jose Maria) Joma Sison,' he will tell you that was long ago," Gonzalez said in reference to the founding chair of the Communist Party of the Philippines and now consultant of its political arm, the National Democratic Front.

In Malacañang, President Macapagal-Arroyo ordered her spokesperson, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye, to make public the report of the Melo Commission.

The President also announced that she had authorized the release of P25 million to the Commission on Human Rights, "so that it can do more to investigate human rights violations and hold training programs for government actors such as the military."

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermi-

DEFENSE/ A17

INSIDE PCGG 21 YEARS LATER

₱61-B loot recovered; no one jailed

(Editors note: On Feb. 22, 1986, Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile and Philippine Constabulary Chief Gen. Fidel Ramos broke away from President Ferdinand Marcos, sparking a People Power revolution. This led to the ouster of Marcos on Feb. 25 1986 and the installation of Corazon Aquino as President. In a series of articles that begins today, the INQUIRER *reviews efforts to recover the ill-gotten wealth of the Marcoses and their associates that began with the setting up of the Presidential Commission on Good Government. Today, there is a perception that while the PCGG has succeeded in recovering some plundered assets, it has destroyed many of the companies that it has sequestered through wholesale looting by government nominees on its board.)*

By Fernando del Mundo

(First of a series)

IN ONE OF HER FIRST OFFICIAL ACTS AFter the peaceful People Power revolution of 1986, President Corazon Aquino issued directives to recover ill-gotten wealth of the dictator Ferdinand Marcos, his family and associates and to bring them to justice.

Executive Order No. 1 was signed on Feb. 28, four days after Marcos fled a howling mob outside the gates of Malacañang and flew into self-exile in Hawaii, ending 20 years in office.

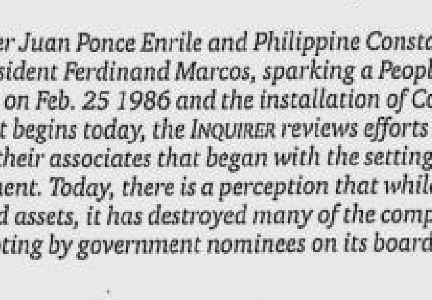
It established the Presidential Commission on Good Government, whose main purpose was to establish a new moral order, dismantle the vestiges of the dictatorship, seize cash and property illegally acquired by Marcos, his family and associates and bring them to justice.

Former Sen. Jovito Salonga, a well-respected opposition figure during the martial law years known for his probity and integrity, was named head of the commission. He served for one year, then quit to run for a Senate seat.

Twenty-one years after it was set up, the PCGG has been able to retrieve P61.8 billion, roughly $1.2 billion of the loot that was esti-

P61-B LOOT/ A15

SPECIAL REPORT



'Losing' firm's execs got ₱66M in pay, perks

By Daxim L. Lucas

HOW CAN A MORIBUND COMPANY, whose only business activity is investing its cash in the money market, still manage to lose P21 million after earning over P111 million during the same year?

More importantly, how can the same firm pay nine of its top officers and directors a total of P66.2 million in salaries, benefits and bonuses over the last three years, if it is indeed losing money?

Such is the situation of the Philippine Communications Satellite Corp. (Philcomsat) and its subsidiary Philcomsat Holdings Corp. (PHC) which has been under the control of the government and the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) since 1986.

"PCGG has destroyed our company," said Philcomsat president and director Erlinda I. Bildner. "They are the antithesis of good governance."

LOSING/ A15

NCCA, Caparas join hands to revive dying 'komiks' industry

By Jerry E. Esplanada

GOOD NEWS FROM *KOMIKS* king Carlo J. Caparas.

He is offering scholarships and lots of cash incentives to budding *komiks* novelists and cartoonists from Batanes to Tawi-Tawi.

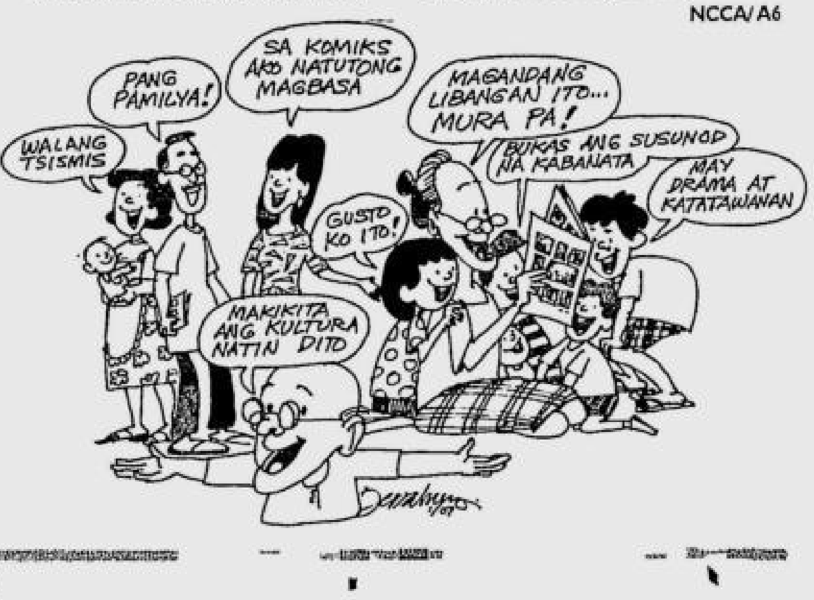
"It would be a great idea to gather all these hidden talents, help them perfect their craft, put up new *komiks* publications and in the process help revive the dying *komiks* industry," he said.

He said it was payback time. "Now, it's time to add young and potential *komiks* writers and illustrators to my list of scholars," Caparas told the INQUIRER.

His wife, former actress-producer Donna Villa, agreed. "It's a very worthy cause," she said.

The Golden Lion Films co-owners have joined forces with the National Commission on Culture and the Arts (NCCA) in re-

NCCA/ A6



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WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Extreme Northern Luzon will have cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers. Eastern Visayas and Mindanao will have cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be cloudy with rainshowers.

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

COMPILED BY KATE PEDROSO, INQUIRER RESEARCH/02/21/07 SOURCE PAGASA

Cops, troops on red alert

By Alcuin Papa and Christine O. Avendaño

THE MILITARY AND THE POLICE WENT ON RED alert yesterday ahead of the 21st anniversary of the first people power uprising.

The move is a precautionary measure "to thwart any plan to disrupt the celebration by any group," Philippine National Police Chief Oscar Calderon said in a statement.

Last year, anniversary celebrations of the four-day Edsa 1 revolt that overthrew the 14-year dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos starting Feb. 22 turned into an attempt to unseat the current government of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

A state of emergency was imposed to thwart what government said was a civilian-backed coup attempt led by Army Scout Ranger commander Gen. Danilo Lim and some Marine officers agitated over allegations of Palace cheating in the last election.

Both military and police officials said they have so far received no information to indicate there are similar plans to destabilize the Arroyo government this time.

"We just want to make sure there are sufficient police forces to address any situation whenever it crops up," said PNP spokesperson Chief Supt. Samuel Pagdilao.

Calderon said they have received unconfirmed reports that members of militant peasant groups were planning to stage a caravan on the first day of the Edsa 1 anniversary.

"While these peasant groups do not pose a threat, the main concern is for their group not to be infiltrated by saboteurs who may take advantage of the situation," Calderon said.

The PNP Chief ordered the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) to activate "Task Force Kapayapaan" to provide area and route security for the duration of the celebrations while strictly observing "maximum tolerance" in dealing with protesters.

Calderon also ordered Region 3 police commander Chief Supt. Ismael Rafanan and Reion 4-A commander Chief Supt. Nicasio Radovan to organize civil disturbance management units and to be ready to augment anti-riot police in Metro Manila. Chief Supt. Leocadio Santiago, chief of the elite Special Action Force (SAF) was also ordered to put one company on standby for deployment.

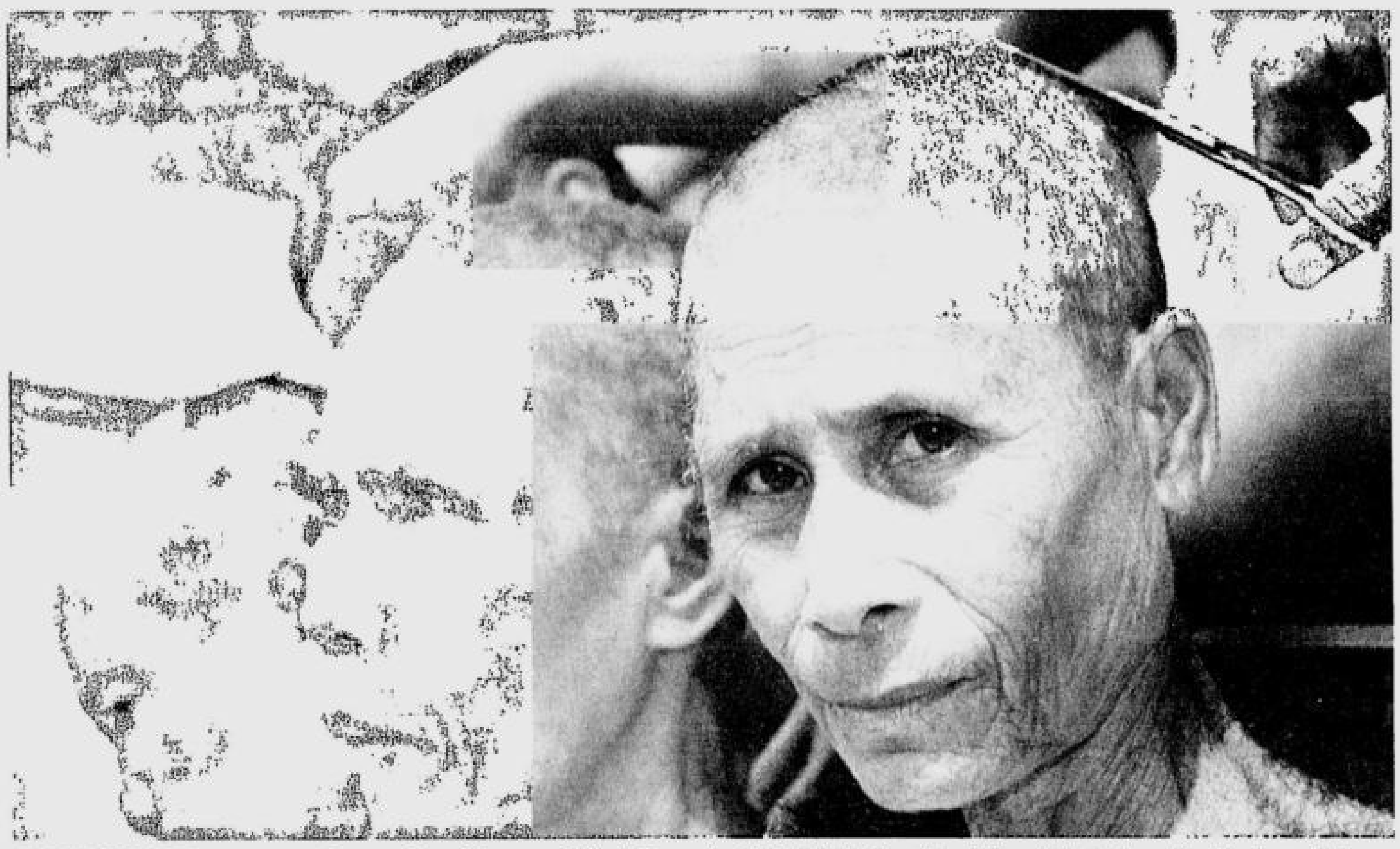
Red or "heightened alert" means that half of the 118,000-strong police force are required to be at their posts at all times."

Meanwhile, Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon said he has instructed Lt. Gen. Alexander Yano, president of the general court-martial, to immediately begin proceedings against Lim and other military officers and men detained for suspected involvement in last year's coup attempt.

The trial of the rebel officers has been postponed twice on many issues, including the bid of the defendants to get hold of a copy of the charge sheet filed against them.

"I just told (Yano) to convene it immediately and go for it," Esperon said. "The military justice system must take its due course."

"On Feb. 27, we hope to finally convene the court and start the trial," the AFP chief said.



CLOSE SHAVE. Three women farmers from Negros—Erlinda Gregorio, 56; Adelaida Santillan, 57; and Maria Arconila, 54—have their heads shaved to protest the failure of the government to install them in the land already awarded to them. JOAN BONDOC

Be patient, farmer-beneficiaries urged

AGRARIAN REFORM UNDER-SECRETARY NARciso Nieto yesterday appealed to farmer-beneficiaries who had camped out anew in front of the Department of Agrarian Reform to wait a little longer for the DAR to arrange their "violence-free installation" in a hacienda in Negros Occidental.

The appeal came hours after several of the farmers, including four women, shaved their heads to protest the DAR's failure to install them at the Hacienda Velez-Malaga, a sugarcane plantation in La Castellana town, as scheduled last Feb. 6.

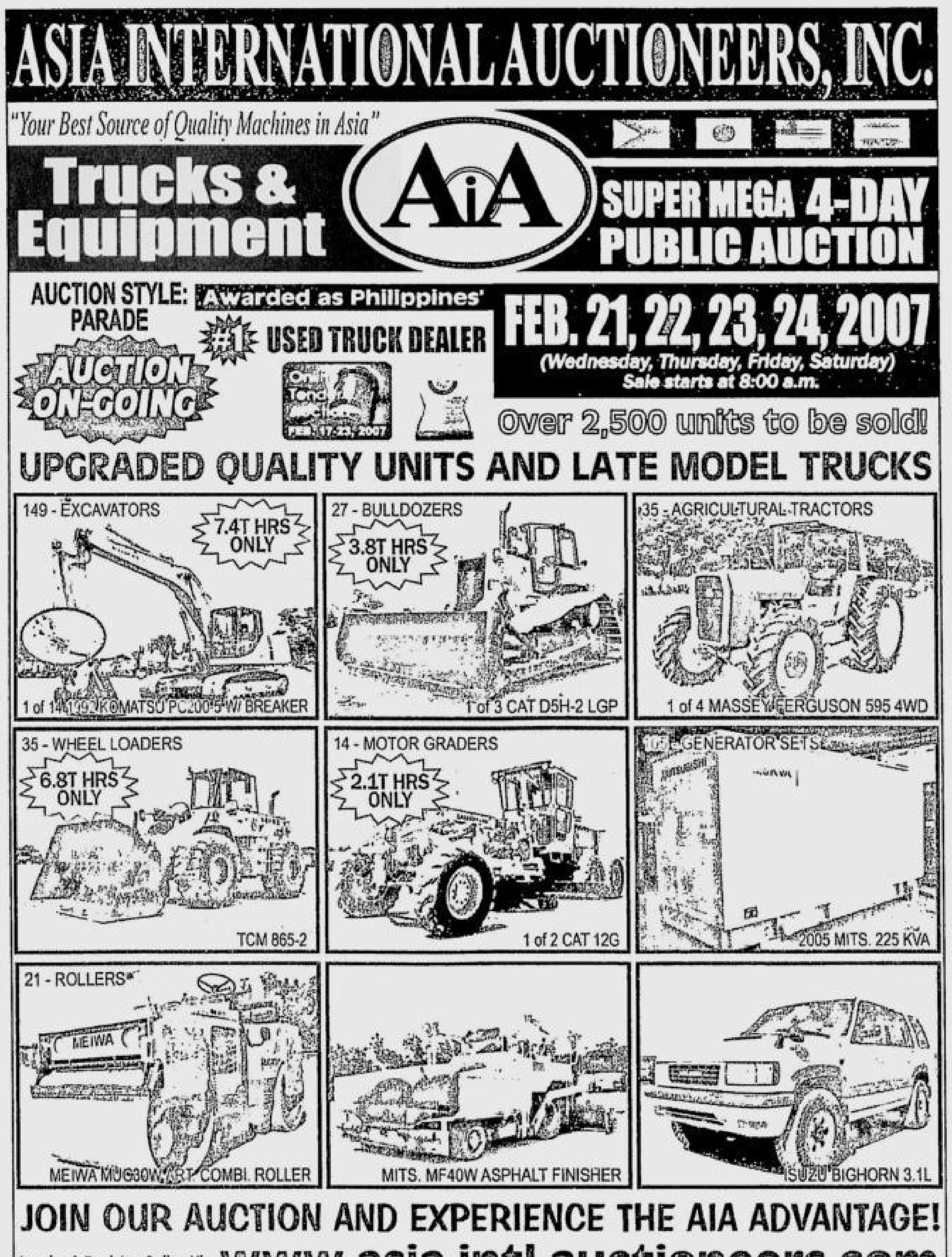
The protesters, who started camping out in front of the DAR main office in Quezon City Tuesday, were among the 122 holders of the certificate of land ownership award (CLOA) that entitled them ownership of a 104-hectare area in the hacienda.

Nieto said that the DAR was deferring their installation pending talks among Secretary Nasser Pangandaman, the farmers' lawyer Christian Monsod, hacienda owner Roberto Cuenca and Secretary Rafael Coscolluela, presidential adviser for the Visayas, to draw up a "peaceful installation."

"The secretary is asking them to be patient and to give us some more time so we can plan a violence-free installation. We just want to make sure that after we install them, nobody will get hurt," he said in a phone interview.

A farmer, Pepito Santillan, was killed and four others were hurt in a clash with other beneficiaries loyal to Cuenca after they occupied a portion of the hacienda without the DAR in late January.

Nieto said that if the officials and Cuenca couldn't agree on a "peaceful installation" next week, the DAR has no choice but to install the farmers "by force" since there was no legal impediment to their installation. *TJ Burgonio*



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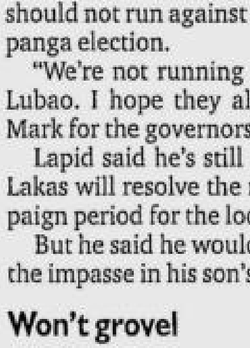
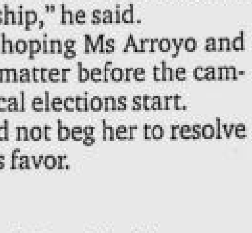
What's cooking? Ping lunches with Lito Lapid

By Norman Bordadora



LAPID



LACSON

CLARK FIELD—ADMINISTRATION SEN. LITO Lapid yesterday met with re-electionist opposition Sen. Panfilo Lacson in the wake of President Macapagal-Arroyo's continued indecision on whom to support for the governorship of her province.

Lapid hosted lunch for Lacson and his party at a Chinese restaurant in the Clark freeport and economic zone here, after which the two had a meeting.

"This is just a friendly visit. We're compadres," Lacson told reporters.

Lapid was one of the sponsors at the wedding of Lacson's son, Pampi, to actress Jodi Sta. Maria. The two also used to sit next to each other at the Senate session hall.

But the visit has unavoidably given rise to speculations amid the impasse between Lapid's son, Pampanga Gov. Mark Lapid, and the President's friend, provincial board member Lilia Pineda, both of whom want to run for governor. **(See related story on page 18.)**

Stopover

Lapid, a close ally of the President, is having serious issues with Ms Arroyo who as leader of the ruling coalition has to endorse the candidate for governor of Pampanga. Ms Arroyo met with the Lapid and Pineda camps just the day before.

Lacson said he was on his way to Pangasinan for a Genuine Opposition sortie and decided to drop in on his friend from the administration.

Lapid said hosting lunch for Lacson was far from being a political meeting. He said the President and the ruling coalition should not take it against him if he met with a leader of the opposition on his turf.

"Why would they get mad? Even they have members of the opposition on Team Unity," Lapid said. Erstwhile oppositionists Sen. Edgardo Angara and former senators Vicente Sotto III and Tessie Aquino Oreta are in the administration's ticket.

As to what the President should do regarding the situation in his province, he said "the equity of the incumbent, that's what we're hoping" they would follow.

"As is the policy in any political party, those who are in position should be allowed to run for re-election [unopposed by those from the same side]," Lapid said.

Pineda is with the President's party, Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino (Kampi), a coalition partner of the ruling Lakas-CMD, of which the Lapids are members.

Lapid said the Lapid and Pineda families should not run against each other in any Pampanga election.

"We're not running against the Pinedas in Lubao. I hope they also do not run against Mark for the governorship," he said.

Lapid said he's still hoping Ms Arroyo and Lakas will resolve the matter before the campaign period for the local elections start.

But he said he would not beg her to resolve the impasse in his son's favor.

Won't grovel

"I don't want to grovel," Lapid said.

"We already talked.. She already knows the situation," he said.

Lapid said he would still run for mayor of Makati and his son will still run for governor even if they do not get the administration's endorsement.

Lapid is running for mayor of Makati and challenging United Opposition president Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay's 20-year dominance of the country's premier business and financial center. Even if he loses, he can still return to the Senate to serve out the remainder of his six-year term.

"When I make a decision, I make sure that I back it up. I'm not the type who'd get back at someone and demand that I get something back for something I did for her," Lapid said.

He said he was willing to help Lacson's senatorial bid in the province.

"This is someone who I know will not leave his friends behind. If I decide to support him, I will support him all the way," Lapid said of Lacson.

Top 10 passers of medical board exam

THE PROFESSIONAL REGULATION Commission (PRC) announced last night that 1,193 out of 2,233 passed the Physician Licensure Examination given by the Board of Medicine in the cities of Manila and Cebu this month.

PRC said the top 10 examinees are the following:

1. Loui Chan Gatdula, De La Salle University-Dasmariñas, Cavite, 85.17% ; 2. Tamara Louise Jethmal Razon, University of Santo Tomas, 84.58%; 3. Reylan Briones David, Our Lady of Fatima University-Valenzuela, 84.50; Omid Uy Etemadi, Cebu Institute of Medicine, 84.50; 4. Meleo Ian Nagal Alonzo, Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila, 83.83; 5. Alma Christine Bathan Gerona, Xavier University-Cagayan de Oro, 83.58; 6. Maximilian Garcia Larena, Davao Medical School Foundation, 83.50; 7. Rex Lipango Bitgue, Remedios T. Romualdez Medical Foundation-Tacloban, 83.17; 8. Jerelyn Benitez Adviento, Our Lady of Fatima University-Valenzuela, 82.75; 9. Mitzi Casas Mangaser, University of the Philippines-Manila, 82.58; 10. Johari Mendez Ancheta, Mindanao State University-Marawi, 82.50; Patrick Gerard Festejo Villafuerte, Far Eastern University-Nicanor Reyes Medical Foundation, 82.50.

The oath-taking ceremony of the successful examinees in the said examination as well as the previous ones who have not taken their oath will be held on Monday, March 12 at 1:30 p.m. at the Fiesta Pavilion, Manila Hotel.

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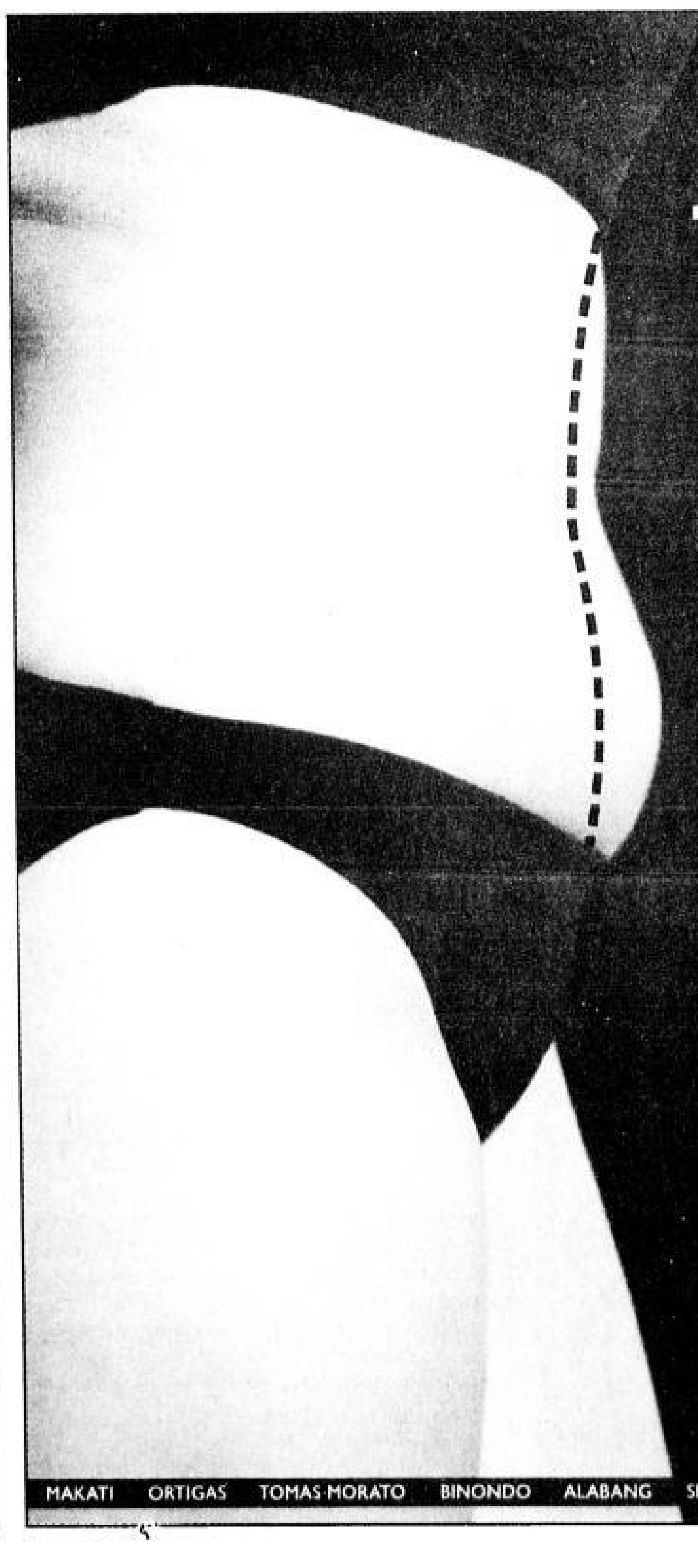

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GO warns Kiko: Come to Plaza Miranda, or else …

PANGILINAN

By Norman Bordadora and Edson Tandoc Jr.

WHILE THE GENUINE OPPOSITION (GO) party has finally decided on Plaza Miranda as the venue of its proclamation rally on Saturday, its guest candidate Sen. Kiko Pangilinan has yet to decide whether or not to attend it.

Pangilinan is in a bind because supporters of the late movie icon Fernando Poe Jr., who comprise a sizeable base of opposition votes, have declared that they will not support him.

Pangilinan, they have not forgotten, shelved all opposition protests with the declaration "noted" during the canvassing of votes in 2004.

On the other hand, the Genuine Opposition (GO) party yesterday warned Pangilinan of "consequences" if he does not attend the proclamation rally which has been moved from San Juan to the bigger and more accessible downtown Plaza in Manila.

"If he chooses not to, surely there will be repercussions," said GO spokesman Adel Tamano, who declined to elaborate.

Tamano, reacting to the stand of the Cortez group, assured that Pangilinan still enjoyed the support of the opposition team. "We will not junk him. We will campaign for his victory, unless he does something (against us)."

Tamano said the opposition's support base "is more than FPJ and Erap," referring to Poe and jailed former president Joseph Estrada.

"Our support base is wide," Tamano said.

Speaking in a media forum in San Juan, actor Rez Cortez of the National Council of Concerned Volunteers said yesterday they would actively campaign against Pangilinan.

Cortez said Pangilinan "had not asked for forgiveness" from the opposition for his role in the canvassing of votes during the 2004 elections. Poe's supporters still maintain that President Arroyo cheated in that election.

Pangilinan declined to comment on Cortez's statements, saying the volunteers are not officially part of the GO directorate

Earlier, Pangilinan also said his attendance was "not an issue," adding that he already had an understanding with the GO leadership regarding "mutual respect for differences in the manner of campaigning."

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'Ka Bel' fights on from hospital 'jail'

CRISPIN BELTRAN'S HOSPITAL ROOM looks more like a campaign headquarters than a prison cell as the left-wing lawmaker gears up for congressional elections in May.

But the policemen guarding his door at the Philippine Heart Center reveal that this is no ordinary candidate or patient.

A year ago this week, the 74-year-old great grandfather was arrested on suspicion of plotting to oust President Macapagal-Arroyo in cahoots with rebel soldiers, communist guerrillas and other lawmakers, triggering a week-long state of emergency.

"There was no truth in the allegation," Beltran told Reuters yesterday in a rare interview from the hospital, where he is being detained while undergoing treatment for a heart ailment and high blood pressure.

Still dapper despite his hospital pyjamas, which he accessorized with a Calvin Klein belt, the veteran trade unionist is confident he will be reelected to the House of Representatives but less certain when he will be released from detention.

"I'm not sure," he said, laughing. "They hold the key." While five other leftist lawmakers accused of plotting against Ms Arroyo walked free in May after taking shelter in the lower house for two and a half months to avoid arrest, Beltran has remained under police custody.

He is allowed visitors and a side-door to his hospital room is unguarded, but three policemen in civilian clothes are posted in the corridor outside.

Beltran, head of the left-wing Anakpawis (Toiling Masses) party was arrested last year under a warrant for rebellion dating back to the mid-1980s when he opposed the rule of former dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

Beltran was imprisoned for two years under martial law but escaped in 1984 and fled to the mountains where he sheltered with members of the communist New People's Army (NPA) and waited for the overthrow of Marcos in 1986.

The father of 11, who suffered a heart attack in 2005, has no plans to slip past his guards this time. Aside from old age, he remains hopeful that the charges against him will be dropped.

"There is still a small opening for justice," said Beltran, wearing a baseball cap and T-shirt emblazoned with his party's name. On his wall a birthday card from left-wing colleagues reads, "Gloria Resign."

BELTRAN

The Philippine government has accused Anakpawis and other left-wing political groups of being fronts for the NPA, which has been waging an insurgency against the state since the late 1960s.

Beltran, or "Ka Bel" (Comrade Bel) as he is popularly known, has denied ever being a member of the NPA or helping to fund the rebel group. He sympathizes with their campaign but says he prefers to use lawful means to fight for workers' rights.

Like other leftist leaders, he believes soldiers are behind the murder of hundreds of left-wing activists and he welcomed a United Nations investigator's statement on Wednesday that the military was responsible for a number of political killings.

Beltran's wife Rosario Soto raised his case with Philip Alston, the UN's special rapporteur on extra-judicial executions, during Alston's visit to the Philippines this week.

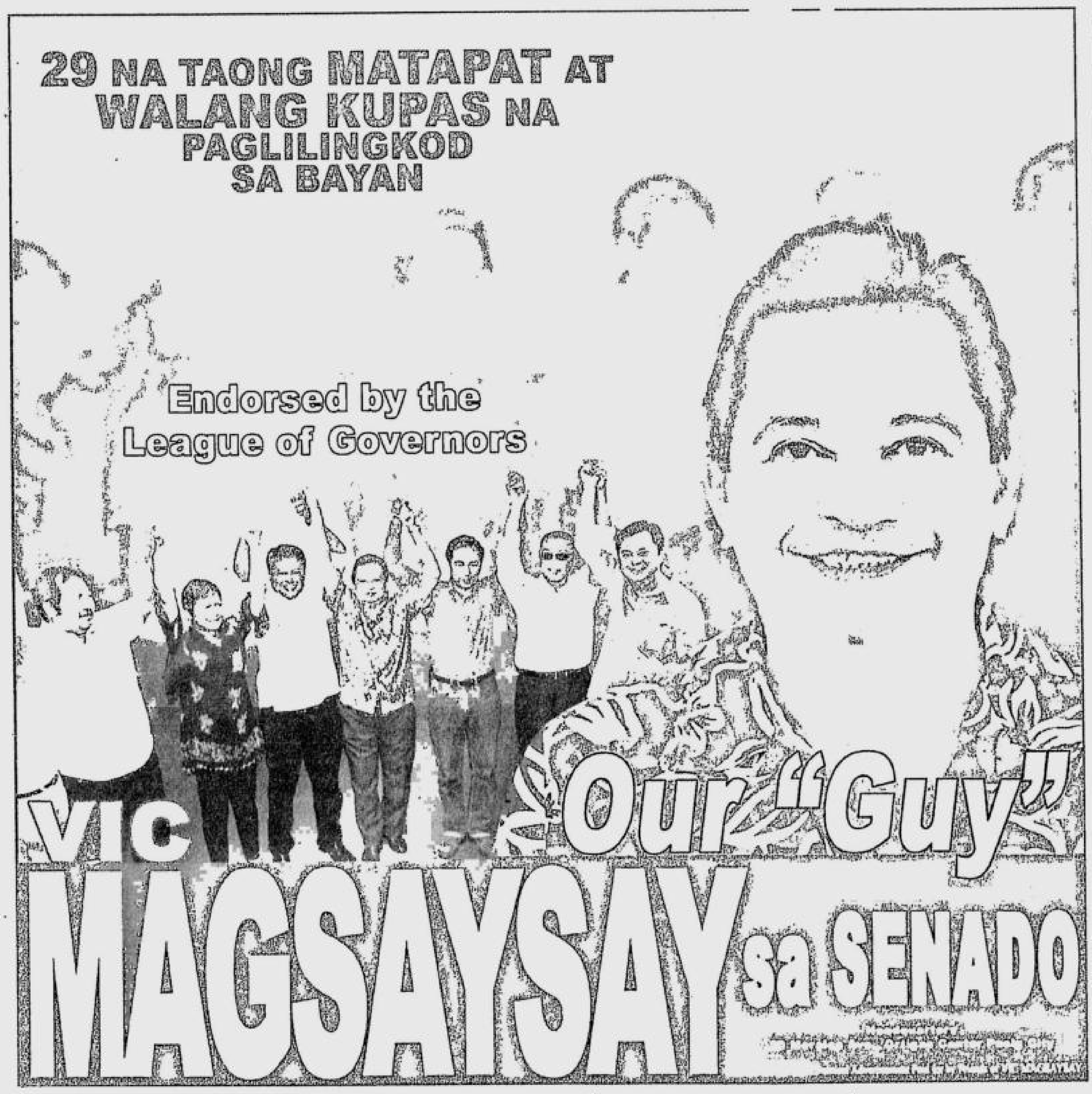
Helen Clark, the New Zealand prime minister, and international trade unions groups have also taken an interest in Beltran's detention.

But for the moment, Ka Bel, who does push-ups and skips to stave off boredom—much to his doctors' dismay—is concentrating on May's polls.

A clutch of young campaign helpers mill around his bedside.

They record his speeches and air them at rallies and on the Internet.

"We are his comrades," said Maureen "Mao" Hermitanio, 29. *Reuters*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VIC MAGSAYSAY sa SENADO

Correction

IN YESTERDAY'S ISSUE, a photo caption on the front page identified erroneously a daughter of Sen. Francis Pangilinan and actress Sharon Cuneta. The girl in the photo is the couple's youngest child Mariel Daniella Sophia or Miel—not Frankie.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to the Day Desk, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Mascardo Street, Makati City, fax Nos. 897-47-93/94; e-mail address: daydesk@inquirer.com.ph.

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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Thursday, February 22, 2007
Chair of Peter

1st Reading: 1 P 5:1-4
Gospel: Matthew 16:13-19

Jesus came to Caesarea Philippi. He asked his disciples, "What do people say of the Son of Man? Who do they say I am?" They said, "For some of them you are John the Baptist, for others Elijah or Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

Jesus asked them, "But you, who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "It is well for you, Simon Barjona, for it is not flesh or blood that has revealed this to you but my Father in heaven.

"And now I say to you: You are Peter (or Rock) and on this rock I will build my Church; and never will the powers of death overcome it.

"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and what you unbind on earth shall be unbound in heaven."

Commentary

Peter is a shepherd, an elder reminding the others that they must care for the flock. They must watch, be an example, and not lord it over others. And Peter knows this, having once been the lost sheep himself, brought back with tenderness to being a follower after betraying and cursing Jesus' name in his fear.

Peter, like us, is quick to tell Jesus who he thinks he is: the Messiah, the Son of the living God! He has the words, but no understanding. The Father has shared this knowledge with him, but Peter must walk the way of the cross with Jesus before he will realize who Jesus truly is, and who he himself is called to be as part of the foundation of the new community of forgiveness and holding bound. We too stand with Peter today and are questioned: Do we know who this Jesus is and who we are called to be as followers?

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NOT THE DOMINANT MINORITY

No copies of election returns for opposition

By Jerome Aning

THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION MAY LOSE ITS right to have a copy of the election returns in the May elections if it does not become the dominant minority party, said Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos Sr.

Abalos said parties identified with the administration Lakas-CMD like Kampi and the Nationalist People's Coalition could get the fifth of the seven copies of the election returns that are prepared during the voting to be sent to Congress..

"The law says dominant minority party and not dominant opposition. It's the party that ranks after the majority and that's what's difficult because I know we'll be misunderstood here," he said.

Previous record

The factors to be considered in determining the dominant majority and dominant minority parties include the record of their participation in the previous elections, the number of incumbent officials belonging to them and their ability to fill up candidates's slates down to the municipal level.

According to Section 27 of the amended RA 7166, or the Synchronized Election Law of 1991, the dominant majority and dominant minority parties are entitled to the fourth and fifth copies of election returns for president, vice president, senator and for congressional district and party-list representatives.

The same rule applies in the election of local officials. A similar rule also prevails for the distribution of the certificates of canvass, which indicate official election results.

Abalos said the administration party, the Lakas-CMD, would not have a problem because it is sure to get accredited as the dominant majority party.

Mix of parties

However, the major opposition grouping, the United Opposition—and for purposes of the senatorial election, the Grand Opposition—is actually composed of many parties, Abalos said.

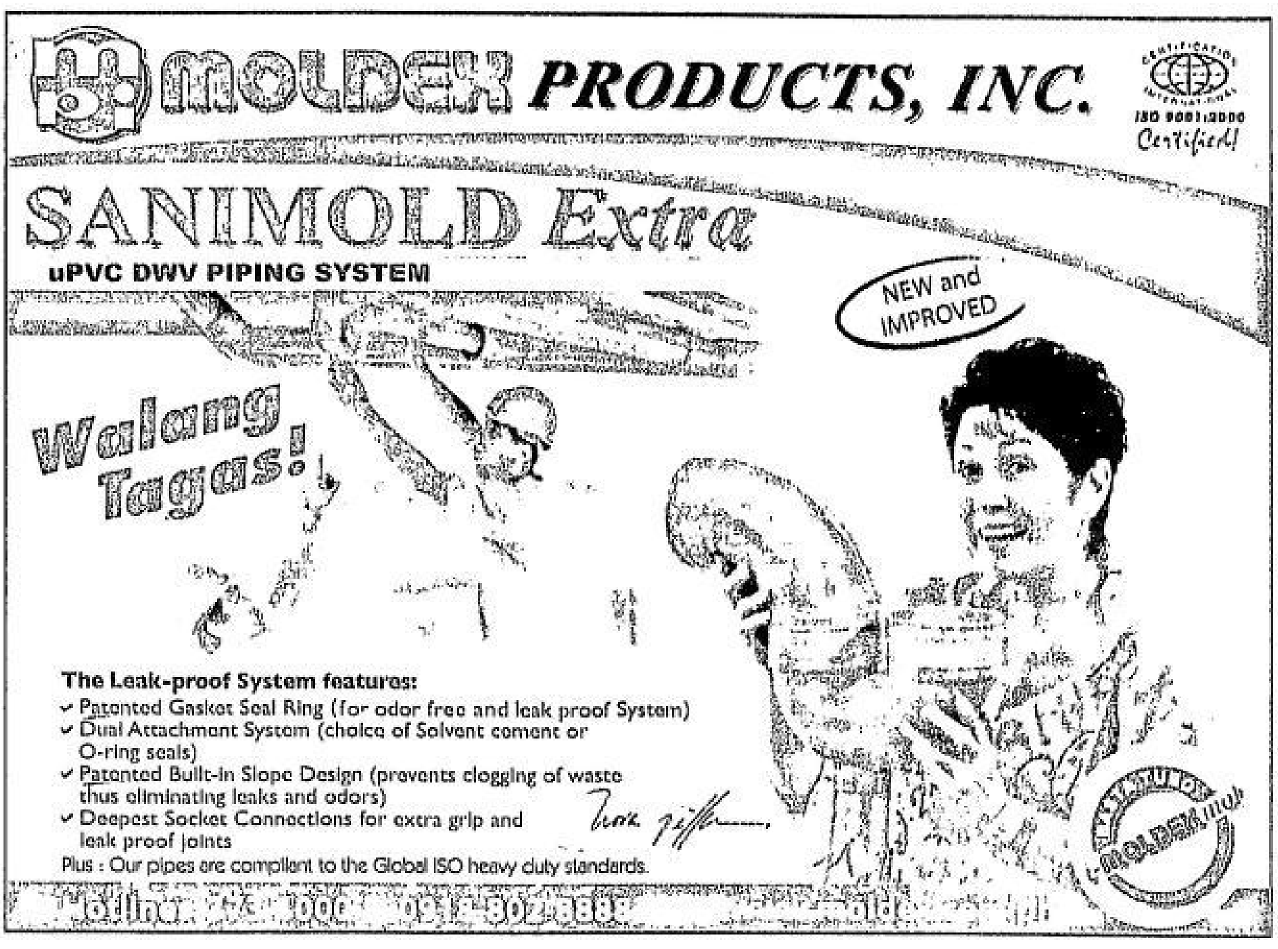
Most of its senatorial candidates indicated their original party affiliation when they filed their candidacy papers, he said.

According to Comelec records, only Sen. Panfilo Lacson and former senator John Osmeña filed as UNO candidates.

The UNO itself is a coalition of the Puwersa ng Masa and PDP-Laban registered with the Comelec on Nov. 27, 2006.

"It would appear that Kampi and NPC would actually have more candidates [in all categories] than UNO. However, Comelec will be attacked again as its critics will say, "Why will both election returns be given to allied parties?" but that is what the law says," Abalos explained.

Abalos said that those who would argue that the UNO should get the opposition's copy of the election returns would have to contend with a problem of which of UNO's or GO's component parties should get the copy.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Recto brods feuding over Vilma's run

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. , DJ Yap, Bayani San Diego Jr. and Marlon Alexander Luistro, *Inquirer Southern Luzon*

THE REAL LIFE DRAMA OF POWER POLITICS in Batangas could have been too much for even a multi-awarded actress like Vilma Santos.

Senatorial candidate Ralph Recto told the INQUIRER yesterday that his wife has decided to drop her plans to run for Batangas governor in the May elections to avoid a head-on collision with his elder brother, Batangas Vice Governor Richard "Ricky" Recto.

From their recent statements to the media, the brothers Recto are clearly at odds with each other over Vilma's political plans.

"Since this has turned out to be a telenovela, Vilma and I have decided to give way. If he wants to run, so be it. We are not as obsessed as he (Ricky) is obsessed with running," said an apparently irked Recto in a phone interview.

Sought for comment, Vilma, a three-term mayor of Lipa City, however, denied backing out. "It's not Ralph who decides. I will be the one who'll make the final decision."

But she said she is willing to give way if it would cause conflict in her family. "But we cannot tell what will happen until March 29 (the deadline for local officials to file their candidacies)."

Vilma had expressed alarm that their family was being dragged into a "cockfight."

Family a priority

"It's very sad," she asserted. "I am not hungry for power. If this will break my family apart, I am willing to make the sacrifice. My family is my priority. I feel that I cannot be effective as a public servant if my family is torn apart. It's because I draw my strength from my family."

Vilma, however, wanted to make one thing clear: "I want the people of Batangas to know that I didn't turn my back on them. I was very willing to serve and inspire them. It's just that we encountered this problem in the family."

The real political drama in Batangas had pitted the Recto brothers against each other.

Early yesterday, Ricky took a swipe at Ralph for prematurely announcing that Vilma would run for governor in the May elections, saying the family has yet to discuss the issue.

"I'm surprised that Ralph would make an irresponsible statement considering that we have talks on Monday (Feb. 24) and Vilma is not sure that we have to make things in public," Ricky said in a phone interview.

In the Team Unity's campaign rally in Pampanga on Tuesday, Ralph confirmed that his wife would run for Batangas governor.

"She will be the next governor of Batangas," Ralph said at the rally.

Suspects Palace

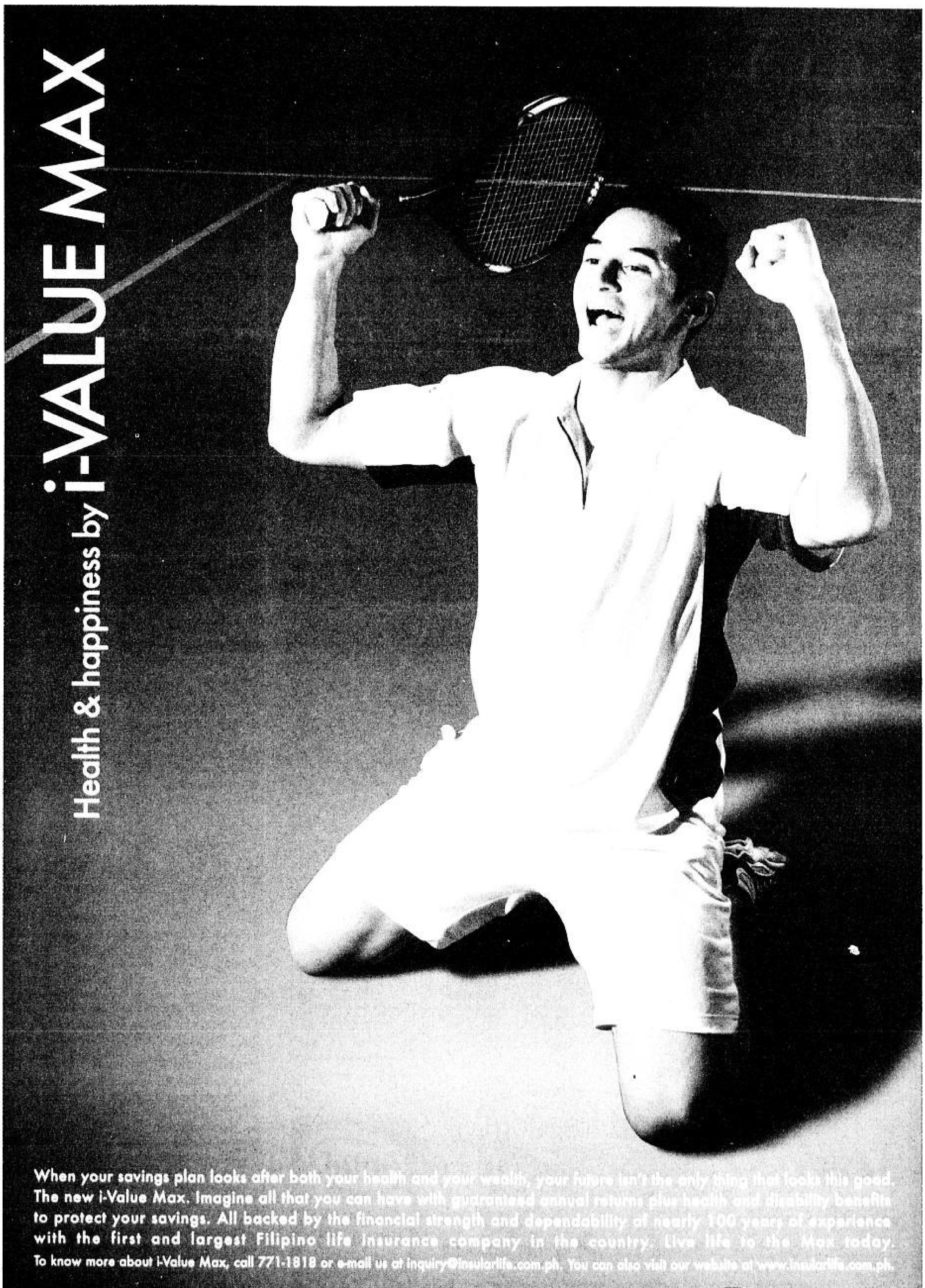
Ricky accused Malacañang officials of having a hand in the issue. "*Alam nyo, tulak lang ng* Malacañang *talaga yan e* (Malacañang is behind this): Gabby Claudio, Eduardo Ermita, so on and so forth," he said.

The vice governor admitted that Vilma may be more "winnable" but boasted that he could do a better job.

"I will admit that she's a better candidate in terms of 'winnability.' But in terms of governance ... I've been vice governor for 12 years. I know the ins and outs of all the four corners of Batangas," Ricky said at a press conference in Makati City.

In reaction, Vilma has this to say: "My brother-in-law is intelligent. I am sure that he can do a good job. But again, this is not a contest of who's better. It's about the willingness to serve. In the end, the people will decide."

But Ralph doubts his brother will win over Sanchez.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Drug firms' lobbyists thrown out of House

From page A1

(PHAP) were banished from the plenary hall after slipping a note into the hands of Makati Rep. Teodoro Locsin late Tuesday night, the end of the two-day special session of Congress.

The note indicated that the lobbyists wanted the lawmaker to question the quorum just when the body was about to pass on third reading House Bill No. 6035. The bill was subsequently passed, paving the way for a bicameral conference to reconcile it with the Senate counterpart measure.

"We desperately need someone to question the quorum now. Can you do it?" the note supposedly read.

Not an errand boy

It also asked Locsin to call up Leo Wassmer, executive vice president and chief executive officer of PHAP, at his mobile phone number 0917-5289308.

Iloilo Rep. Rolex Suplico yesterday said he was studying the possibility of filing criminal charges against the four lobbyists for disrupting legislative proceedings. "This is the work of vampires ... Congressman Locsin is not their errand boy," he said.

Akbayan party-list Rep. Risa Hontiveros-Baraquel yesterday filed a resolution seeking an inquiry into the incident that caused a lull at the special session called by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Baraquel's staff identified two of the lobbyists as Tinine Bautista and Mailyn Ocampo, both of them allegedly lawyers working for PHAP, particularly association members Pfizer Phils. and Glaxo-Smith Kline.

Corporate constituent

"It was a brazen display of corporate arrogance in front of so many public health advocates pushing for the bill," Baraquel told reporters.

She said it was high time that the country come up with professional standards for lobbying. She also wanted to find out if the multinational drug companies belonging to PHAP violated the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act.

In a statement, PHAP described as a "myth" the note its lobbyists had sent Locsin.

"Since PHAP is a corporate constituent in the first congressional district of Representative Locsin, we wanted to get (him) to listen to our proposed amendments," the group said.

"There is nothing wrong with that. In any democratic country, the first step one must take in order to be heard is to write your congressman," it added.

In an interview with the INQUIRER, Locsin said the lobbyists ostensibly had the impression that he was siding with them because of the many objections that he had raised.

"It was a catastrophic conclusion," he said. "It's one thing for us to oppose the bill. It's another to dictate things on us."

Hontiveros and representatives of the Oxfam advocacy group said these same people, together with other lobbyists, were perennially present at the plenary hall's gallery to monitor the proceedings on HB No. 6035 known as the Cheaper Medicine Act of 2007.

Toothless Senate version

Locsin explained that his objections were meant only to firm up what he called the "toothless" Senate bill authored by Sen. Mar Roxas II.

"It's a flawed bill and we don't like defective bills coming from the Senate," he said. "They're not as smart as us so we corrected it."

During the late-night session, Locsin said he initially made no noise about the PHAP note. Instead, he said he warned his colleagues to expedite the writing of a new copy of HB 6035, one that would include key amendments earlier brought up on the floor.

Rules on quorum

Locsin was wary that because he was not acting on the note, the lobbyists might convince another lawmaker to raise the issue of quorum. Such an action would have scuttled the bill anew because the number of lawmakers present essentially did not reflect a quorum.

But under the rules, there is a quorum unless someone challenges it.

"We have to finish because I am already being asked to question the quorum," he told the group that included Representatives Ronaldo Zamora, Loretta Ann Rosales, Junie Cua, Justin Chipeco, Ferjenel Biron, Suplico and Baraquel.

Told about the note, Rosales confronted the group whose members denied disrupting the proceedings.

Get out

At this point, Locsin fumed and told them: "You know what, the four of you, get up and get out of here before I kill you! I don't want to see your face. You know what's good for you."

Deputy House Speaker Gerry Salapuddin yesterday sought a ban on the lobbyists from the session hall. "That's a despicable and unacceptable practice. We do not tolerate such shameless interference," he said in a statement.

The banishment of the lobbyists was a symbolic victory for advocates of HB 6035."

With the amendments, the House version not only embraces the parallel importation of medicines sold at a much cheaper price elsewhere by the same makers. It also improves access to these cheap medicines.

Philippine prices are considered second to the highest in Asia, partly because of existing intellectual properly laws protecting patent holders.

Another key amendment was a provision loosening patent protection that will cover only medicines.

Locsin argued that putting the matter in the general provisions of the patent law might inadvertently encourage people to steal formulas like those of beers and soft drinks.

NCCA, Caparas join hands ...

CAPARAS

GUIDOTE-ALVAREZ

From page A1

viving the *komiks* industry.

For a start, the NCCA is set to hold next month a "national *komiks* congress," said its executive director Cecile Guidote-Alvarez.

A former factory worker and security guard, the Pasig City native has written more than 800 *komiks* novels, many of which have been made into hit movies.

Caparas has sent hundreds of poor students from Metro Manila and nearby provinces to various schools as his scholars.

"Imagine masters of the trade joining hands with neophytes, the budding writers and artists (Caparas) is talking about. Then add the business sector and full government support to the equation. I don't see why the *komiks* trade couldn't be revived," Alvarez said.

She said Filipinos could never be globally competitive unless they are rooted in their heritage, history and talent.

National memory

"Memory to a nation is important. You don't want the country to suffer from Alzheimer's disease. You can use *komiks* here, say in introducing our cultural diversity, with our folk tales and epics. Look at the Hudhud epic of the Cordillera. Who knows about it?"

That is why, "it is important not to let *komiks* die," she said.

The greats

Caparas said "the new generation of *komiks* novelists and artists can follow in the footsteps of *komiks* greats like Antonio Velasquez, Francisco Coching, Clodualdo del Mundo, Mars Ravelo, Jim Fernandez, Pablo Gomez and many others," if not national hero Dr. Jose Rizal.

Rizal is believed to be the first Filipino cartoonist. In 1886, while visiting Europe with his painter-friend Juan Luna, the then 25-year-old Rizal illustrated in cartoon form the now renowned fable, "The Monkey and the Tortoise."

Golden years

From more than 150 in the 1970s and 1980s, *komiks* publications are "currently down to five-or-so," said Commissioner Joe Lad Santos of the National Commission for the Filipino Language.

"The early 1970s up to the entire 1980s were the golden years of *komiks*. They reached up to 100-plus, including the fly-by-night (bomba komiks). Total circulation then was about 400,000 a week," recalled Santos, creator of the popular *komiks* series Condor.

Santos said the electronic media were partly to blame for the current state of the *komiks* business. "When Don Ramon Roces died, business people stopped investing in *komiks* publishing. Then came animation. Most of our best *komiks* artists have been pirated by various US comics publications," he said.

He cited the likes of Filipino artists Lan Medina and Thor Infante "who are paid at least $200 per page in the United States. Here, one gets paid only P50 per page during the heydays of *komiks*. Today, it's P175 to P250 per page and you'll get paid only after publication of your strip," Santos said.

Highest paid

He said Caparas was the highest paid during the best years of Pinoy *komiks*. But Carlo is also partly to blame for the decline of the local *komiks* trade. In 1990, he abruptly stopped writing for the *komiks* and went on a (three-year) hiatus with wife Donna.

Caparas left up to 36 novels hanging, mostly Roces publications, according to Santos. "There were so many people hooked on his novels."

In Paco, Manila, Beatriz Deduque, 70, noted that the *komiks* trade started going down in the early 1990s.

"We started selling *komiks* in 1960. Today, there's still old-time favorite Liwayway magazine ... also Bannawag. But romance pocket books and song hits and horoscopes in *komiks* form (which sell at P13 and P30 each) seem to have replaced best-selling *komiks* titles," Deduque said.

Like Deduque's stall on Pedro Gil Street, *komiks* have not been on display at the Clarin's newsstand in Batangas City and similar establishments in other parts of the country.

The early 1900s saw the birth of politically oriented publications like Telembang ng Kampana and Liping Kalabaw, which featured cartoons that dealt mostly with political figures of the era..

Father of Pinoy komiks

These cartoon strips are now recognized as the forerunners of the present-day Filipino *komiks*, according to Cynthia Roxas in Legacy Publishing's "A History of Komiks of the Philippines."

But the formal history of Philippine *komiks* started in 1926 when Antonio S. Velasquez, then working at the Banaag Press in Sta. Cruz, Manila, saw the potentials of the illustrated medium.

Velasquez's earlier "work consisted of conceptualizing, visualizing and illustrating the musical compositions of the likes of Professors Nicanor Abelardo, Francisco Santiago, Constancio de Guzman and Leon Ignacio."

Regarded as the "Father of Pinoy Komiks," he later joined the artists' pool of the Ramon Roces Publications when the publisher bought Banaag Press' photo engraving department.

Kenkoy

In the Jan. 11, 1929 issue of the vernacular weekly Liwayway, the *komiks* character Kenkoy (by Romualdo Ramos) made its initial appearance.

Public response to the "Mga Kabalbalan ni Kenkoy" strip was so encouraging, prompting Ramos to launch a new character—Ponyang Halobaybay.

During World War II, Liwayway continued publication under Japanese management. Kenkoy was even used by the Japanese invaders to disseminate their information drive nationwide.

Ace Publications

Shortly after the war, Roces and Velasquez put up Ace Publications. At 25 centavos per copy, the first issue of Pilipino Komiks (with a print order of 10,000 copies) hit the streets on June 14, 1947.

Its maiden issue featured Nanong Pandak (written by Velasquez), Lukas Malakas (by Jose Zabala Santos), Kalabog (by Larry Alcala), and Prinsesa Urduja (by Vicente Manansala), among others.

Ace later published Tagalog Klasiks in 1949, Hiwaga in 1950, Espesyal and the pocket-sized Kenkoy in 1952.

A decade later came Graphic Arts Service with *komiks* publications like Kislap, Pioneer, Aliwan, Pinoy Komiks, Pinoy Klasiks, and Teens Weekly.

The 1970s saw the entry of top-selling *komiks* titles like Superstar, Topstar, Universal and Pilipino Reporter.

Roxas also wrote: "1975 marked the beginning of what could be called the era of the super novels ... Aliwan had Anak ni Zuma; Pinoy had Betia; Teens Weekly had Bionic Baby."

From komiks to movies

Add to the list one of the most memorable novels in Movie Specials and perhaps in the entire *komiks* industry—Bakekang (by Caparas and illustrated by Mar Santana), which was later made into a film with Nora Aunor playing the title role (and currently a GMA 7 telenovela).

Other famous Caparas hit novels were Ang Panday, Totoy Bato, Andres de Saya, Pieta, Angela Markado, Harimanok, Mong and Till Death do Us Part.

Komiks took on another dimension during the permissive '60s with the proliferation of so-called *bomba* publications. After a brief ban on mass media during martial law, "the world of *komiks* had suddenly become unbelievably antiseptic and wholesome," wrote Roxas.

Before their decline, *komiks* remained a "mechanism for escape, a healthy one at that for many impoverished Filipinos," Caparas said.

But "whatever a (*komiks*) novel's topic may be, it will always be a source of delight and reading pleasure for both adults and kids alike," he said.

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JV bid to stop opening of his bank records rejected anew

THE SUPREME COURT HAS DENIED WITH finality San Juan Mayor JV Ejercito's petition to stop the Sandiganbayan from looking into his bank accounts in relation to the plunder case against his father, deposed President Joseph Estrada.

The high tribunal upheld its earlier ruling that Ejercito's trust account and his savings account with the Urban Bank, now the Export Industry Bank, which prosecutors have subpoenaed, were not covered by the country's bank secrecy laws.

In its Jan. 30 resolution, the high court said the basic issues raised by Ejercito's petition had already been passed upon in its earlier ruling and that no substantial arguments were presented that would warrant a reversal of the decision.

The court ruled that Ejercito's accounts were no longer protected by bank secrecy laws because the amounts deposited there were alleged to form part of the subject of the plunder case against Estrada.

It said Ejercito's accounts were also not protected by the bank secrecy laws which exempt accounts involved in bribery or dereliction of duty of public officials, which is analogous to plunder.

Ejercito questioned the subpoena of his bank documents, saying that the contents of his accounts were acquired through legal means and were thus covered by the laws on bank secrecy.

He also said the information concerning his accounts had been illegally acquired so the prosecution could not use it.

Estrada, who was toppled in a military-backed people power uprising in January 2001, has been charged with plunder for allegedly taking illegal gambling bribes and kickbacks from the tobacco excise taxes, and placing the money in a secret bank account under the name of Jose Velarde.

Estrada denied owning such a bank account, claiming it belonged to his friend Jaime Dichaves.

Leila B. Salaverria

Erap petitions court for campaign furlough

ESTRADA

LAWYERS OF DETAINED PRESIDENT JOSEPH Estrada yesterday asked the Sandiganbayan to let him spend the election campaign season at his San Juan residence or let his visitors, including the media, see him in Tanay without having to seek permission from the court.

In a hearing at the special division yesterday, lead defense counsel Rene Saguisag asked that Estrada be allowed to stay for at least 90 days in his San Juan home so that opposition leaders and his followers could easily reach him during the campaign period .

Saguisag said a furlough for the ex-President was essential in "leveling the playing field" in the May elections.

Easier access to Estrada, who remains apolitical force in the country, would also help the spokesperson of the Genuine Opposition slate to get Estrada's side on the issues, he said.

It was also the first time that Estrada has made such request during an election period, Saguisag noted.

"Is there a pressing necessity [for it]? What makes the 2007 elections any different?" asked Associate Justice Francisco Villaruz Jr.

Saguisag answered: "A fair and credible elections in May is waning … we hope that this election may be seen in another perspective."

Alternatively, Saguisag asked the court to modify Estrada's custodial arrangements in his Tanay rest house to allow visits from opposition leaders, supporters and the media without having to file a motion in court for each visit.

"It is only fair that people are allowed to enjoy their right to know and voters be enlightened in their choices in relation to the May 2007 elections through the press," Saguisag said.

Presiding Justice Teresita Leonardo de Castro gave Saguisag two days to put the requests from the lawyers and from Estrada himself in writing.

The hearing was prompted after Estrada complained of a tightening of security in his villas.

The Philippine National Police has limited his visitors to members of Estrada's immediate family and to one lawyer per visit since Feb. 6 following reports of a communist plot to kill Estrada.

Special State Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio said there were no such restrictions. But he said "other visitors" should seek clearance from the court before making a visit.

He also maintained that the matter was a "political consideration" and not a legal issue for the court to consider.

Jocelyn R. Uy

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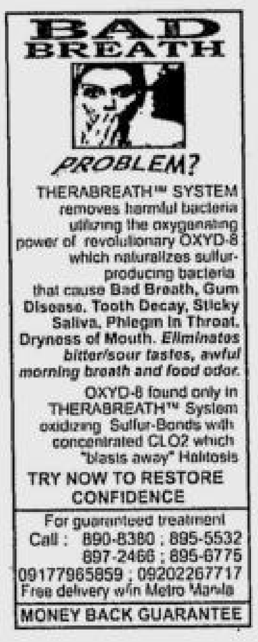
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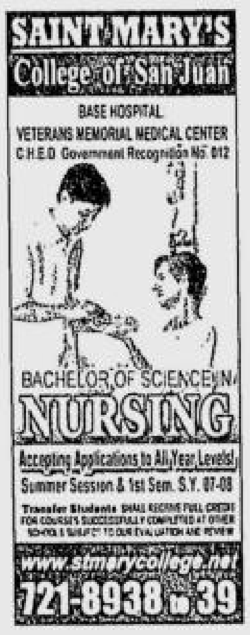
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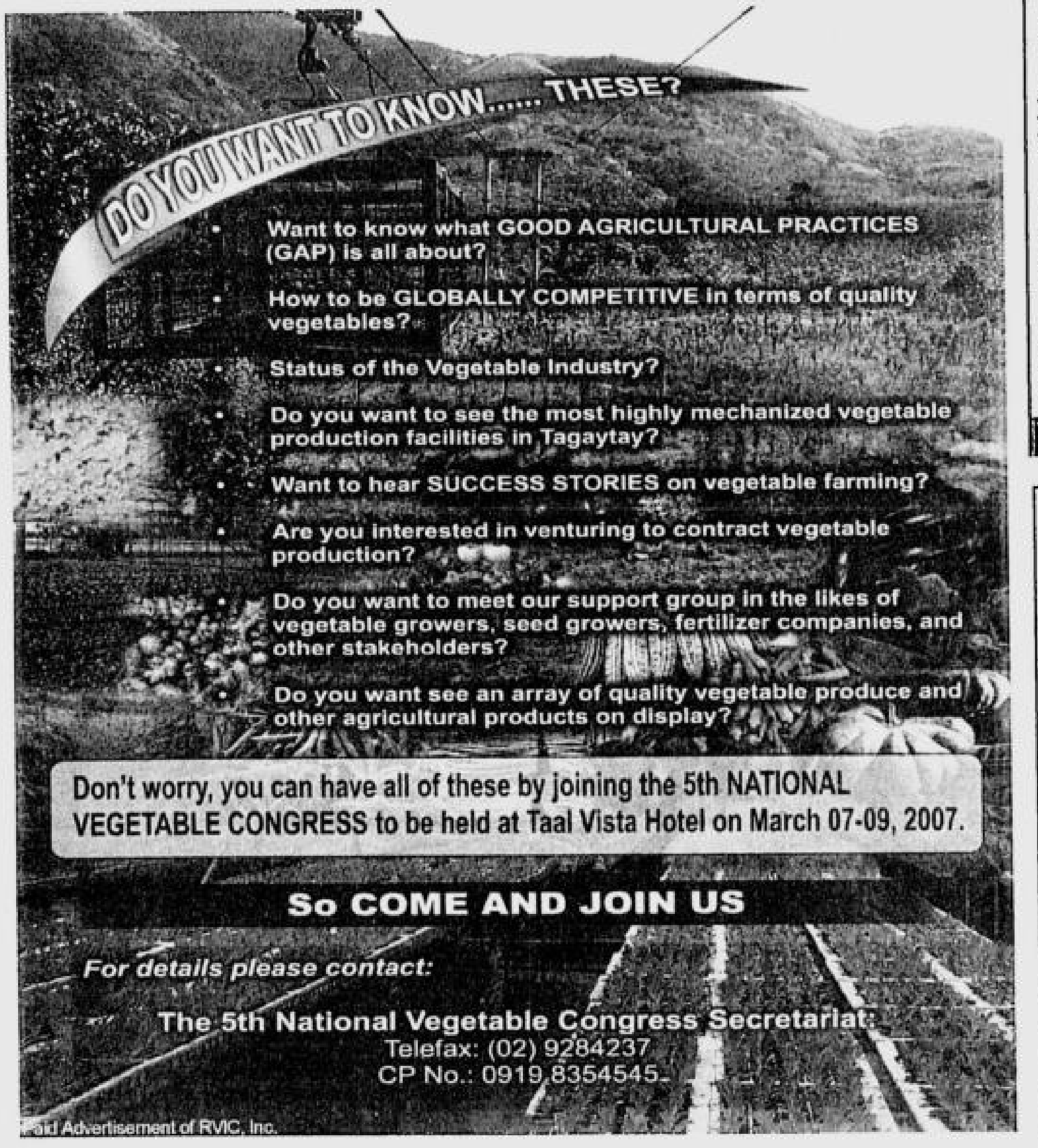
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ANNOUNCEMENT

The Judicial and Bar Council announces the opening of the position of **DEPUTY OMBUDSMAN FOR VISAYAS**, vice Hon. Primo C. Miro who retired effective January 31, 2007.

An applicant or recommendee must (1) be a natural-born citizen of the Philippines; (2) be at least 40 years old at the time of appointment; (3) be of recognized probity and independence; (4) be a member of the Philippine Bar; (5) not have been a candidate for any elective office in the immediately preceding election; and (6) have been for ten years or more a judge or engaged in the practice of law in the Philippines.

Applications or recommendations must be submitted **NOT LATER THAN March 6, 2007**, to the JBC Secretariat, 2nd Flr. Centennial Bldg., Supreme Court, Padre Faura St., Manila (Tel. No. 552-9512; Fax No. 552-9598; e-mail address jbc@supremecourt.gov.ph; JBC supremecourt@yahoo.com.ph). Applicants must submit 6 copies of the following:

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from the JBC Website **http://jbc.supremecourt.gov.ph**)
Picture (2x2)
Certificate of Good Standing or latest Official Receipt from the IBP National Treasurer
ITR for 2 preceding years
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Kapatiran Senate bets proclaimed Saturday

ANG KAPATIRAN PARTY IS all set to proclaim its senatorial bets on Saturday at 9 a.m. at Club Filipino.

To be proclaimed are Zosimo "Jess" Paredes, lawyer and former undersecretary and executive director of the VFA commission; Adrian Sison, lawyer, broadcaster, author and teacher; and Martin Bautista, medical doctor, gastroenterologist, former OFW, and the youngest of the three.

Committed to put God in politics, Ang Kapatiran promotes a platform-based politics with clear and specific objectives—all aimed at enhancing the common good.

In an effort to build a nation of character, Ang Kapatiran promotes the politics of virtue and of duty, transparency and public accountability, and good citizenship, it said in a press statement. "This is the reason why Ang Kapatiran party has a built-in education component," said Nandy Pacheco, Ang Kapatiran founder and secretary general.

The national officers of Ang Kapatiran are: Manolo Dayrit, chairman; David Lim, vice chairman, Mario Ongkiko, president; Bennie de Guzman, vice presiden; Rene H. Peronilla, treasurer; Amading Astudillo and Ting Enriquez, deputy secretary generals; Vinchu Lapid and Eddie Cuenca, chair and co-chair, respectively of membership committee; and Norman Cabrera, chair of electoral committee.

FROM ASH THOU ART...
Catholics flock to the Redemptorist Church in Baclaran for the Ash Wednesday rites signalling the start of the Lenten season. This scene was repeated in Catholic churches all over the country yesterday. REM ZAMORA

It's Plaza Miranda, not SJ, for GO rally

IT WILL BE MANILA's Plaza Miranda—not San Juan or Makati—that will host the proclamation rally of the Genuine Opposition senatorial slate on Feb. 24.

"We all know it's really the place for political expression and more importantly for us, we wanted to distinguish the Genuine Opposition from [the administration's Team Unity]," said GO spokesperson Adel Tamano.

Tamano said that unlike the supposedly "luxurious, air-conditioned" proclamation rally of administration candidates last week in Cebu City, "ours is simple. We want to be with the people because we're not afraid of them."

Pro-poor

"[Plaza Miranda] is closer to urban poor centers, and really, our advocacy is pro-poor and good governance," he added.

Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay, president of the United Opposition (GO refers only to the senatorial lineup), said Plaza Miranda was a good choice because of its role in the country's political history.

"Isn't there a saying, 'can you defend what you're saying at Plaza Miranda?' " he said in Filipino.

Opposition leaders said they chose Plaza Miranda over San Juan, the hometown of deposed President Joseph Estrada, because of logistics, among other concerns.

Ernesto Maceda, a member of Uno's executive committee, said that when it was announced that it would be San Juan, "many people complained that the place was too small."

"Many delegations wanted to join. So we had to opt for a bigger venue," Maceda said.

He said San Juan Mayor JV Ejercito had told him that the San Juan Arena could accommodate only "about 4,000 people."

Maceda said Manila Mayor Lito Atienza, an administration loyalist, has already granted the permit to use Plaza Miranda.

DJ Yap

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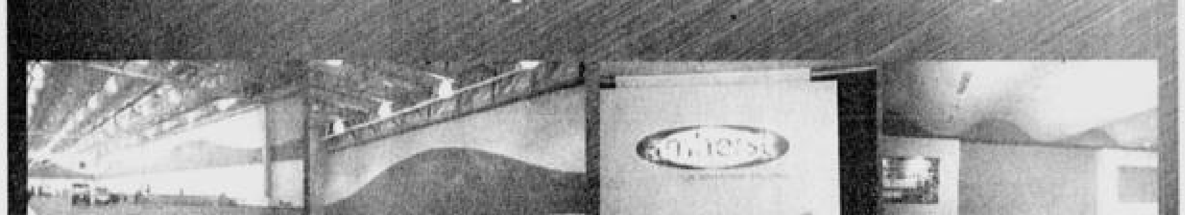

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10 YEARS of WORLD TRADE CENTER METRO MANILA

A DECADE OF WORLD-CLASS EXCELLENCE

The World Trade Center Metro Manila (WTCMM), the only exhibition hall in the Philippines recognized by the prestigious Union des Foire des Internationale (UFI)[1], the association of the world's leading tradeshow organizers and fairground owners, major national and international associations of the global exhibition industry, celebrates its 10th year as a world-class venue for international and local exhibitions, trade shows and special events.

A Vision Shared with WTC's

WTCMM is affiliated with the internationally renowned World Trade Center Association, a non-profit, non-political organization headquartered in New York, U.S.A. WTCMM shares the vision of over 300 member in over 90 countries all over the world of creating business relationships and understanding among nations through trade. Among the range of services a WTC can offer are facilities for trade such as display and exhibit venue and services, trade education services, group trade missions, the WTC Club, and the WTCA On-line services.

WTCMM was conceptualized in the 1990's when the Investment and Capital Corporation of the Philippines (ICCP) saw the need for a world-class exhibition venue in the country that can help promote international and local trade and tourism. The venue would enable local producers and manufacturers to display their wares to foreign and local buyers. It was likewise a venue for foreign suppliers to introduce their products and keep local businessmen abreast with the latest international trends, practices and designs, without having to go overseas.

Completed in 1996 at the Financial Center Area in Pasay City, WTCMM opened in time to host the Asia Pacific Trade Fair which coincided with the APEC Summit held in the Philippines that year. With the opening of WTCMM the Philippines was placed in the map of exhibition facilities in the region, having the amenities and features of a world-class exhibition venue.

World Class Standards

Designed by the internationally known Gensier and Associates of the U.S.A., whose work includes the famous Moscone Convention Center in San Francisco, WTCMM boasts of state-of-the-art design, world-class facilities and amenities at par with the world's best exhibition halls. WTCMM's exhibition hall has a total floor area of 8,300 square meters and a ceiling height of 10 meters which allows for flexibility and freedom in even the most complex design layout such as two-storey exhibition booth set-ups and sprawling special designs.

In addition, the halls have a floor loading capacity of up to 250 lbs. per sq. ft., allowing it to accommodate heavy exhibition articles and equipment such as payloaders, forklifts and cranes, which are put on display during construction and heavy machinery industrial shows. The provision of water supply and drainage on the exhibition floor also enable exhibitors to stage irrigation systems display during agricultural shows while architectural and design shows could have water feature designs and fountains operating inside the hall.

WTCMM also offers a full range of services to complement its halls, such as a business executive dining facility, meeting rooms, a business center, an international trade library, and the WTC Club. A seasoned team of professionals is always at hand to assist exhibition and event planners for all their needs.

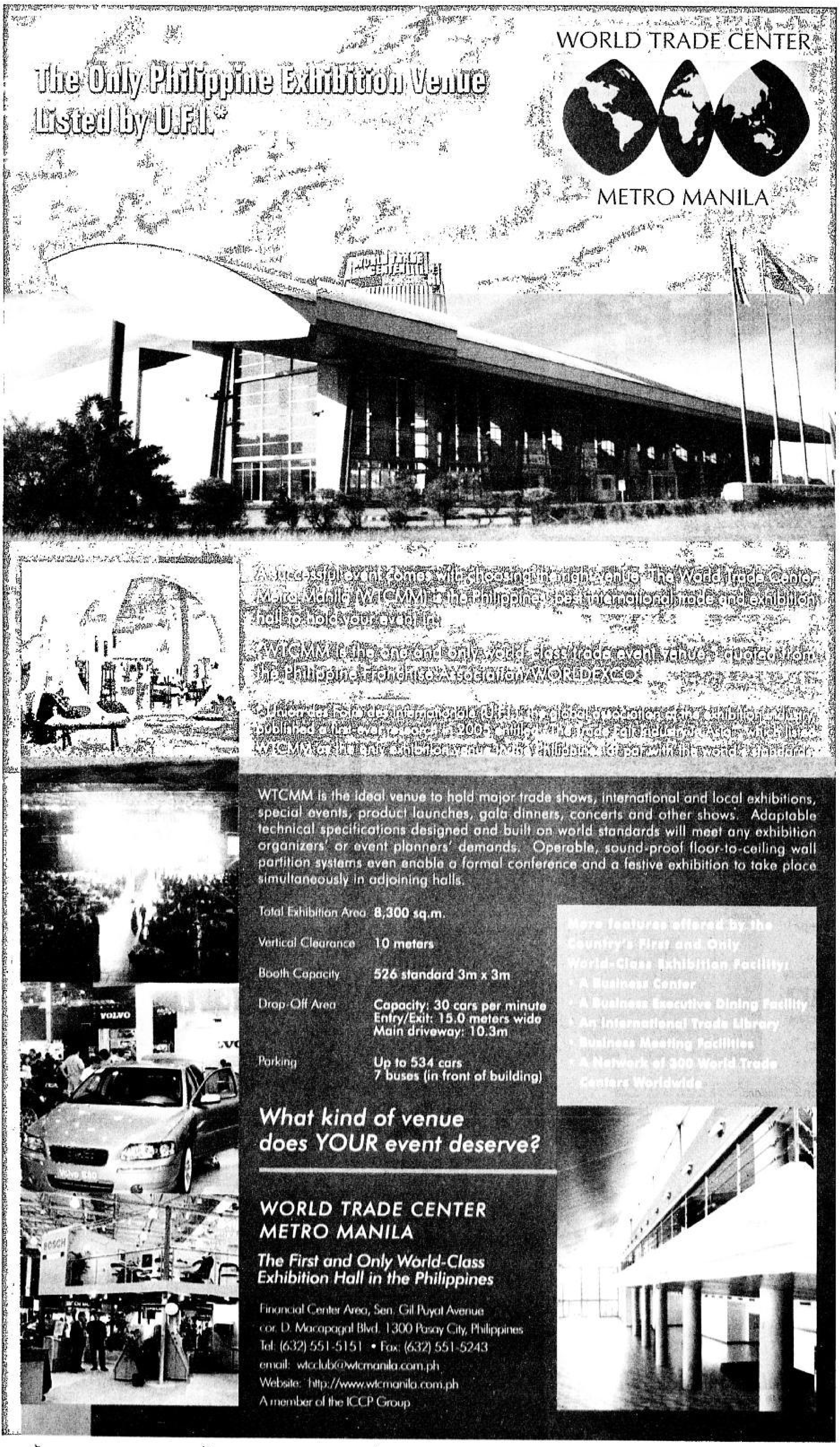
Home of the Biggest and Most Prestigious Events

Since its establishment, WTCMM has been the venue to the most prestigious international and local events. WTCMM's roster of events include the "Women's Forum", with then U.S. First Lady Hilary Clinton as guest of honor; the "Pacific Basin Economic Council's Anniversary" Gala dinner attended by economic ministers, trade specialists and top businessmen in the country; Expo France '98, showcasing various French industries; the launch of the Department of Tourism - Philippine Convention and Visitors Cooperation's "Meetings Make Manila"; "Les Rendezvous Avec de Sens", that showcased French artistry in performance, music, food and set-up; and the "Personal Care Ingredients Asia" which showcased around 200 suppliers of raw materials and ingredients of personal care from all over the world.

WTCMM is also the venue of the bi-annual "Manila FAME Show" of the Center for International Trade, Expositions and Missions (CITEM), which showcases quality lifestyle products such as houseware, furniture, décor, fashion jewelry and accessories. This show generates a large number of attendees of foreign and local guests. The Manila FAME in October 2006 generated 1,936 foreign buyers. This, in turn, translates to direct economic and tourism benefits to the country in terms of dollar revenues not only from product orders during the show, but from hotel accommodations, transportation, food and entertainment, gifts and souvenirs and post-event tours. This clearly demonstrates WTCMM catalytic contribution to the development of the Philippine MICE (Meetings, Travel Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions) industry.

WTCMM has also been the preferred venue of the biggest trade fairs and industry exhibitions in the country, such as the Philippine International Furniture Show, Philippine World Building and Construction Expo (Worldbex), Philippine International Construction Equipment and Building Materials Exposition and Technology Forum (Philconstruct), Manufacturing Technology World (MTW), Systems Integration Philippines (SIP), Asia Food Expo (AFEX), Agrilink/Foodlink, International Food Expo (IFEX), BioSearch, Manila International Auto Show, World's Food Expo (WOFEX), PowerTrends Exhibition and Conference, Bakery Fair, Philippine Die and Mold Association Convention and Exhibition, Manila International Book Fair and United Architects of the Philippines Convention and Exhibition (UAP Conex), to name a few.

As it celebrates its 10th Anniversary, the World Trade Center Metro Manila is proud to have been a part of all these world-class events and vows to continue to provide a venue at par with the world's best in the decades to come.



A successful event comes with choosing the right venue. The World Trade Center Metro Manila (WTCMM) is the Philippines' best international trade and exhibition hall to hold your event in.

"WTCMM is the one and only world-class trade event venue" - quoted from the Philippine Franchise Association WORLDEXCO

*Union des Foire des Internationale (UFI), the global association of the exhibition industry, published a first-ever research in 200- [illegible] "The Trade Fair Industry in Asia" which listed WTCMM as the only exhibition venue [illegible] Philippines at par with the world's standards.

WTCMM is the ideal venue to hold major trade shows, international and local exhibitions, special events, product launches, gala dinners, concerts and other shows. Adaptable technical specifications designed and built on world standards will meet any exhibition organizers' or event planners' demands. Operable, sound-proof floor-to-ceiling wall partition systems even enable a formal conference and a festive exhibition to take place simultaneously in adjoining halls.

Total Exhibition Area	8,300 sq.m.
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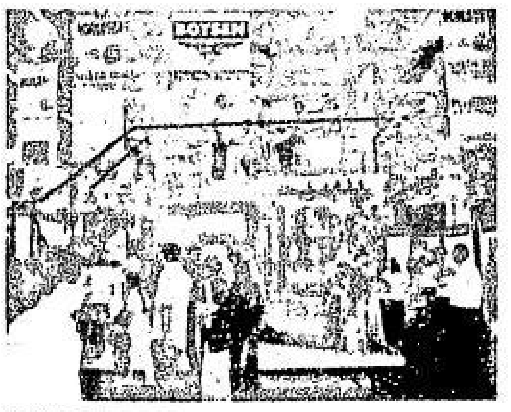

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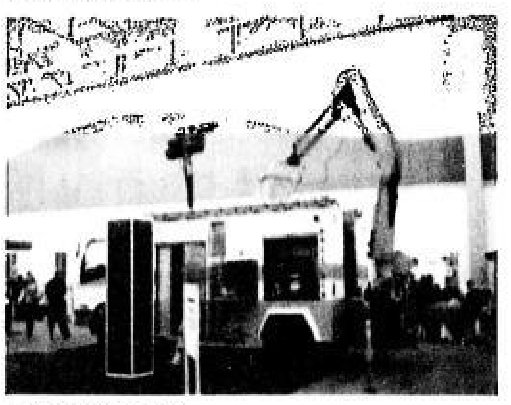

PROTECT '06

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[1] *WTCMM was listed as the only exhibition venue in the country at par with the world's standards in UFI's 2005 research entitled "The Trade Fair Industry in Asia". The Report is a comprehensive study of Asia's growing trade fair industry featuring the key trends and players in the region, market profiles and an analysis of available exhibition space in this part of the globe. The research report undertaken by the prestigious association covers the trade fair and exhibition industry in Mainland China, HongKong, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Macau, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam.*

MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES

A decade after its establishment, the World Trade Center Metro Manila (WTCMM) carries on its mission to be a world class venue for international and local exhibitions and events in the Philippines. WTCMM provides a venue for international manufacturers, traders, and businessmen to meet and explore business opportunities. The holding of shows thereat has allowed Philippine producers and exporters to keep abreast with the latest in global designs, trends and standards and to showcase their products to buyers and guests from all over the world.

WTCMM has greatly contributed to the promotion of Philippine trade, the Meetings, Incentive Travel, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) industry and tourism by providing a world class facility comparable to the world's best.

As our economic recovery gains further momentum, I enjoin each and everyone to take advantage of this opportunity and initiate activities in WTCMM that can foster growth in our international trade and restore our rightful place on the map of the global MICE and tourism industries.

Congratulations to the World Trade Center Metro Manila for ten glorious years of enlivening trade and tourism, and promoting the growth of the Philippine economy in general.

Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo
President of the Republic of the Philippines

MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Our warmest greetings to the management and staff of the World Trade Center Metro Manila (WTCMM) as you celebrate your 10th Anniversary on February 22, 2007.

The establishment of the World Trade Center Metro Manila is a booster to the Philippine trade and industry sectors by providing a world class venue for international and local exhibitions and events.

The exhibition industry has proven to be an active catalyst to international trade by exposing the best and the latest technology and services from all over the world to our local businessmen, and in turn, allowing our exporters to showcase their products and services to potential buyers from here and abroad.

WTCMM has indeed become a preferred venue for local businesses who want to make inroads into the global market and to international companies to expose their products and services to potential local trading partners, distributors and buyers through the biggest and most well-attended exhibitions and trade fairs in the country.

Finally, WTCMM places the Philippines in the map of international trade, side-by-side with over 300 member World Trade Centers in approximately 90 countries all over the world.

To WTCMM, we convey our sincerest congratulations for 10 years of promoting international trade and commerce.

Mabuhay!

Peter B. Favila
Secretary of Department of Trade and Industry

MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY OF TOURISM

On behalf of the Department of Tourism, I wish to congratulate the World Trade Center Metro Manila (WTCMM) on its 10th anniversary.

I commend the WTCMM for helping promote tourism by providing a world class venue for various international and local Meetings, Incentive Travel, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) events. Hosting the biggest and most prestigious trade shows and events since it opened its doors in 1996, WTCMM has been a partner of local show organizers in providing its exhibitors, buyers and guests the most convenient and best-equipped place to do business. With its accessibility to our international airport and seaport, five-star hotels, fine dining restaurants, entertainment facilities and transportation links, international and local participants to shows held at WTCMM find it to be an ideal venue. With its world-class amenities, WTCMM is able to attract foreign exhibitors and buyers to participate in international exhibitions and events which also allow them to explore and acquaint themselves with the many attractions of our country and the warm hospitality and service excellence that Filipinos are known for.

All these translate to multifold benefits to our country's tourism in terms of, *inter alia,* revenues from hotel accommodations, food and entertainment, gifts, souvenirs and post-event tours.

We take this opportunity to wish WTCMM more years of promoting the Philippines as an excellent MICE destination. Mabuhay!

Joseph H. Durano
Secretary
Department of Tourism

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN, MANILA EXPOSITION COMPLEX, INC.

The World Trade Center Metro Manila (WTCMM) takes pride in celebrating its 10th year of providing our country with the only world class venue for international and local exhibitions, trade shows and special events. It is the only exhibition facility in the Philippines which is globally recognized by the prestigious Union des Foire des Internationale (UFI), the global association of the exhibition industry in its 2005 research entitled "The Trade Fair Industry in Asia".

Since its establishment in 1996, WTCMM has served as a catalyst to the development of our country's international trade and tourism by introducing the concept of the World Trade Center, which is envisaged to promote international trade by concentrating traders and trade-related services under one roof. The WTCMM accomplishes this by providing a world class exhibition space where our manufacturers and service providers can showcase their products and services to international and local buyers. Conversely, it also provides global manufacturers an appropriate venue to exhibit their products to potential buyers and distributors from all over the world. Through these international exhibitions, our local manufacturers are given the opportunity to keep abreast with the latest global trends and designs. WTCMM also provides our entrepreneurs and businessmen with avenues for business matching through its global network fo 300 member WTC's in over 90 countries worldwide.

On its 10th anniversary, WTCMM would like to celebrate this milestone with a continued commitment to serve our business partners and valued clients in the decades to come.

On behalf of the World Trade Center Metro Manila, we thank all those who have been a part of our successful 10 years and wish you more years of flourishing business with WTCMM.

Guillermo D. Luchangco
Chairman, Manila Exposition Complex, Inc.

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How much longer?

EDITORIAL

TWO FILIPINO PASSENGERS, ONE OF THEM A congressman, were caught last week with bullets in their possession before they could board their planes. Both were interrogated by airport security personnel and freed.

Another example of equal treatment by the authorities? Not at all. In fact, these cases showed that some people are more equal than others in the eyes of authorities.

Reynaldo Manuel, who was bound for Taipei, was found to be keeping two bullets in his bag last Friday. When asked to explain, he said he was carrying them for protection—not against personal enemies, but against *kulam* (witchcraft).

It was a funny excuse, but hardly a novel one. Airport personnel have come across similar cases and they have learned to understand how some superstitious folk put their trust in bullets (and various other objects) to protect them against evil spirits or bad fortune. Manuel was told to put his explanation in writing and then allowed to board his flight—minus his amulets, of course. It was a fair resolution to a harmless little problem.

The same thing cannot be said of the case of Laguna Rep. Danton Bueser, which ended with the lawmaker similarly getting off the hook—at least temporarily. Bueser was held by airport security officials after he was caught with 20 live bullets and a pistol magazine in his carry-on bag. But he didn't invoke superstition as an explanation. He claimed that it must have been the work of somebody who was out to destroy his reputation. He denied ownership of the bullets, and said they were "planted" while he was waiting for his flight. He pointed out that he had passed the first two phases of the airport security inspection and the personnel handling the X-ray machines had not detected the presence of the contraband in his bag. (He was caught during the final inspection.)

Bueser was lying. A subsequent review of the airport security video tapes showed that his carry-on bag already contained the bullets when he entered Naia Terminal 2 for his flight to San Francisco. He was able to bring in the bag with the bullets because the personnel handling the first two X-ray machines looked away at the time the bag was going through.

(We don't know how to compute the probability of two security personnel manning two separate X-ray machines, looking away when the same bag was passing the machines, but it should be extremely low. But that was exactly what happened, according to airport officials. Which is hardly reassuring at this time of paranoia over terrorism, especially with respect to air travel.)

So what was the gentleman from Laguna up to? Bueser isn't telling.

In the meantime, he remains free. He was released the very same day to the custody of Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay, who seems to have built a reputation as a patron of lawmakers who run afoul of the law. (Pichay held the hand of then Manila Rep. Mark Jimenez when the latter flew back to the United States to serve a jail term for making illegal contributions to the presidential campaign of Bill Clinton.) And no case has been filed against him to this day, with airport officials still trying to puzzle out what crime to charge him with.

Ordinarily, that should not have posed a problem. There is a law penalizing illegal possession of ammunition and there is another law prohibiting the carrying of the same stuff during the election period. It is simple enough to find out if he had the necessary permit to do so. But this is no ordinary offender. He is a lawmaker and he has powerful sponsors, including someone who is aspiring to be a senator.

Thus, airport officials would rather stay out of the case, if they could. The chief of security at the Naia, retired Brig. Gen. Angel Atutubo, said the general manager of the Manila International Airport Authority would decide what action to take against Bueser. Alfonso Cusi, the general manager, said he had ordered "a full investigation."

But what else are they investigating? And how much longer will they be investigating such a simple case? If they are looking into Bueser's possible links with al-Qaida, the people might understand, but first they have to be told about it.

Atutubo has been quoted as saying that Bueser should be grateful that the bullets were found here, because had he been able to take his flight, "he would now be in jail in America." That was as candid an admission as any of how slow and ineffective our system of justice can be.

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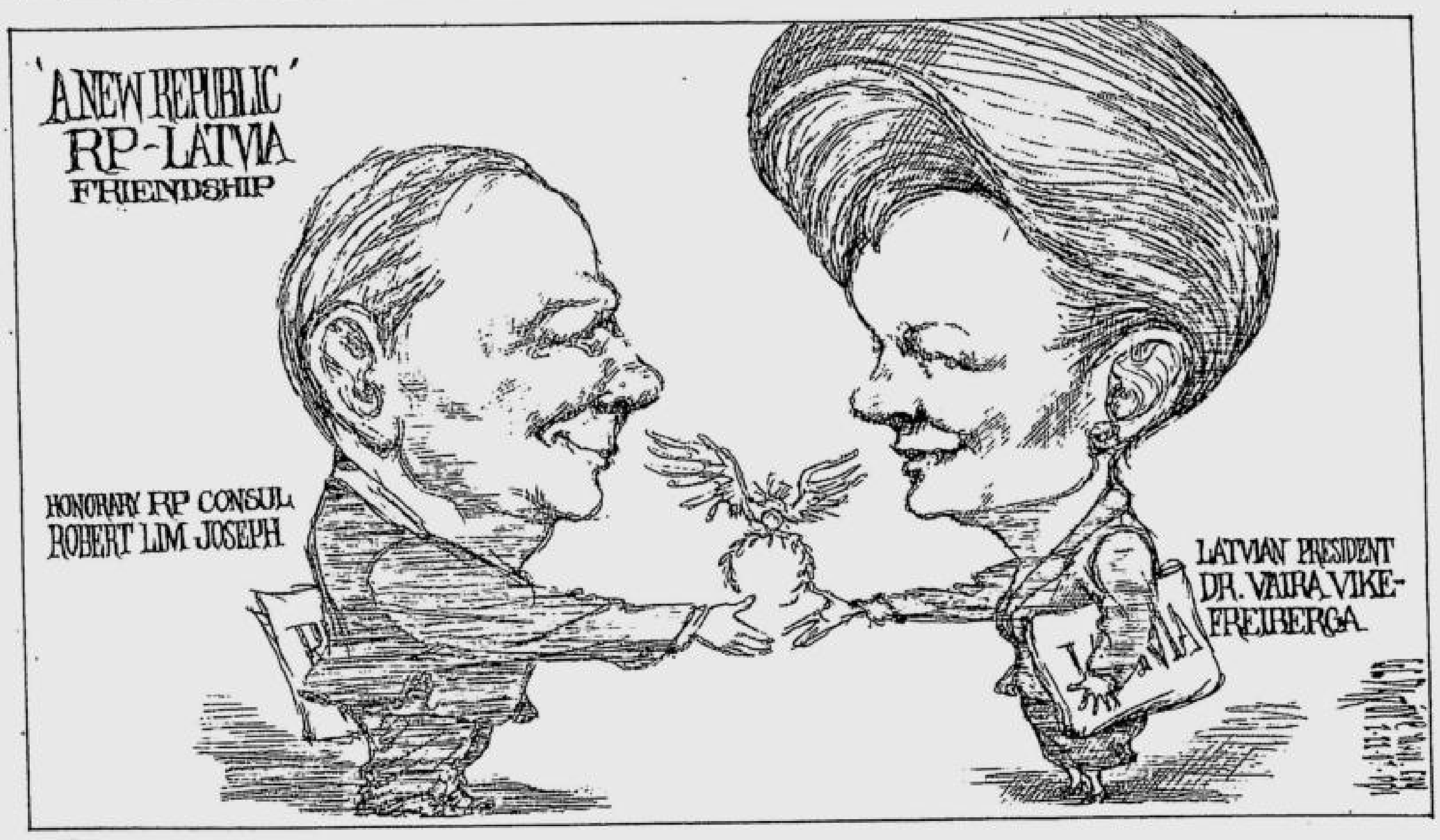


Stealthier danger

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

CURBS ON AERIAL SPRAYING OF PESTICIDES over Mindanao banana plantations recently hit the headlines. Hedge-hopping aircraft that spray pesticides make good photo ops. And the stakes are high. The Philippines exported 1.90 million metric tons of bananas last year.

But the more lethal threat is less visible—and far stealthier.

Some 13.5 metric tons of toxic mercury slosh yearly into major rivers, from Naboc to Kinking, then build up to health-threatening levels in the Davao Gulf. Lead tailings poison the Hijo, Matiao, Masara, Batoto and Manat Rivers. Mercury-laced waters, from Compostela Valley, seep into tributaries, as they drain into Butuan Bay. Mercury-stained stream sediments threaten the Agusan river.

In 1956, fish and shellfish, contaminated by mercury discharged by a chemical plant, poisoned 2,252 men, women and children in Minimata, Japan. The "Minimata" disease resulted in brain lesions, tumors, paralysis and miscarriages. Over the past 36 years, 1,043 people have died from the affliction.

So, will mercury, smuggled in by Davao gold panhandlers, poison the food chain here? Limited studies already track traces of mercury in schoolchildren, pregnant mothers and miners.

"There's been no publicized mercury poisoning of humans here," answer Dr. Ed. B. Prantilla and Carmelita Martinez who've just completed a study titled "Heavy Metals Contamination in the Davao Region." But "In remote areas, there are few doctors and inadequate medical facilities. Mercury poisoning may be attributed to other causes."

Prantilla and Martinez synthesized the findings of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau, academics and other agencies, over 14 years. Two-year-old infants in Tagum City, whose mothers were exposed to mercury, lagged in development and speech, they note. And new US research reveals striking similarity of the symptoms of mercury-poisoning with autism.

A former UN econometrician, Prantilla teaches development studies at University of Southeastern Philippines. Martinez is a faculty member of the school of government and management. Their study focuses on the most problematic metals: mercury, lead and cadmium.

The ecological collapse of the 194-hectare Lake Leonard—or "Crocodile Lake"—in Compostela Valley province pinpointed lead and cadmium as the culprits. Once an excellent fishing ground, the lake was "killed" by the dumping of lead in the late 1970s. The Bureau of Fisheries found that the lead, cadmium and copper contents registered in fish samples breached critical tolerable limits.

"Heavy Metals" begins from the path-blazing 1982 analysis of Rosita Fundador, who documented the mercury contamination of some Davao Gulf fish and seashells. The survey includes the 2006 study conducted by the Department of Health's Region 11 arm, which found that "Fish samples from Davao Oriental, Davao del Sur and Davao City markets ... had mercury contents higher than the allowable limit of 0.3 micro gram per gram." But the DOH study didn't pinpoint where those fishes were caught. Hence, it has not been released.

Prantilla and Martinez also indicate research gaps: "The heavy metals content of freshwater fish in contaminated rivers and lakes of the Davao Region, as well as plants consumed by people," have not been studied so far. Even more worrisome is the failure to track mercury seepage into aquifers, recharged within mining and gold processing areas.

Mercury levels in animals are a festering question. In the 1990s, carabaos keeled over mysteriously in Barangay Naboc. There's suspicion that mercury and cyanide in irrigation water caused those deaths.

Illegal mercury supplies seep through Davao's porous borders. "The one major source of mercury pollution is gold ore processors," the Prantilla-Martinez study notes. They cluster in Diwalwal and Kingking, Pantukan in the Compostela Valley; and Apokon, Tagum City in Davao del Norte.

Most of the 796 operations get mercury illicitly. That would include small artisanal miners. "Annual mercury consumption of Davao Region, due to gold processing, amounted to 13,524 kilograms of mercury." But this can be curbed from "the user side," i.e., by government imposing strict compliance with environmental laws.

Government could clamp the condition that polluters pay for damage they incur. Pollution taxes should be paid to repay those whose health have been impaired. There is need, too, to cleanse polluted seas and water systems. Heavy metals ought to be factored into wastewater discharge fees.

"Government action on high levels of mercury in certain species of fish caught in Davao Gulf is long overdue." Inaction has serious health implications "especially because those fishes with high level of mercury are eaten by a large portion of the Davao Region population."

Doctors Nelia Maramba and Cristina S. Dablo earlier found elevated mercury levels in the blood and urine samples of 114 schoolchildren and 70 miners they examined. Further studies, however, are needed to get a more detailed insight into the health issues.

Many remain unaware of the dangers posed by heavy metals pollution. An information campaign by the government, academe and civil society is urgently needed. But the dangers have been played down with arguments cautioning against economic disruption in mining.

But there is a need to consider the long-term effects and economic costs of neglecting the problem, Prantilla and Martinez argue. The present ambiguity merely turns a blind eye and covers up the effects of heavy metal pollution. It limits vision only to short-term benefits. "(But) available studies are already a cause for alarm."

* * *

E-mail: juanlmercado@gmail.com

The other ad

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

I REMEMBER AGAIN A JOKE I HEARD MANY years ago about Marcos. A foreign correspondent came to town and wanted to get a feel of the public sentiment about Marcos. He chanced upon a man in the street and asked to interview him. The man agreed, and the journalist asked him, "What do you think of Marcos?"

The man froze and said, "I can't answer that question here, the walls have ears, we have to go elsewhere." They went to a park and the journalist repeated his question. The man still looked anxious and said, "This place is still too full of people, we have to go to a more secluded place." They went to a pier, and again the journalist repeated his question. The man replied: "Please excuse my nervousness, but just to be sure let's take a boat and row out into the water."

They did so, and the journalist said, "So now, we're all alone, no one can hear us. What do you think about Marcos?" And the man whispered, "I actually like him."

Something not unlike this happened to me recently. It was a reunion of sorts in the province, and in the middle of the festivities someone pulled me aside to ask, "Why do you keep attacking GMA—don't you see anything good in what she does?" After blinking a few times at the suddenness of the question, I said as pleasantly as I could, "No." And I asked him why he had to pull me aside to ask it. "Because," he said beyond earshot of the others, "I'm actually *maka*-GMA."

Why am I not surprised that someone who wants to profess to be a fan of GMA now has to do it in secret?

I remembered these because of an ad that I keep seeing with numbing regularity each time I watch the NBA on Basketball TV. In the ad, a singer of a band sings in a plaintive Freddie Aguilar-type voice a paean to the legit numbers racket known as the Sweepstakes. At least the PCSO is the ostensible subject of the paean. But GMA's ubiquitous face there shows otherwise.

The lyrics are positively ingratiating. The reason I know the words is their sheer repetition, the ad materializing at nearly every commercial break, giving me a case not just of "last song syndrome" but of being subjected to hypnotic suggestion under torture. It's tapered off over the last few days but last I looked, it was still there. The song goes:

"*Ikaw ang kanlungan sa kahirapan/ Ikaw ang pagasa at kinabukasan/ Haplos mo ay lunas sa bawat pagal/ Ikaw ang dampi ng pagmamahal: PCSO* (You are the refuge from poverty/ You are the hope and the future/ Your stroke cures every tired body/ Yours is the caress of caring)." While this is being sung, GMA is portrayed in various poses of solicitousness. No, the office is not the object of adulation, the person is.

Every time I see that ad—which is inescapable unless I foreswear to give up the NBA—I ask aloud, "*E sino ba ang nakakapagal sa bawat pagal sa bansang ito* (Who is making the tired of this country tired)?" Take it from her name.

My first reaction upon seeing this ad was annoyance, particularly because it came at the break of a particularly suspenseful game where my favorite team, the Phoenix Suns, was trailing its opponent. My subsequent reaction from seeing it again and again—enough to give me the paranoid feeling it is expressly aimed at me—was awe at the cheekiness of it. And no small amount of infuriation that I and the other taxpayers of this country, who earn our money honestly through the sweat of our brow, were being fried in our own fat.

We saw the same ad before in different clothing but with the same ferocious ubiquity during the 2004 elections. The PCSO—and Pagcor—ran ads then depicting GMA as the secular version of Our Mother of Perpetual Help: visiting the victims of floods, earthquakes and natural disasters. Then too you wanted to say: Forget the natural disasters, mind only the human one. Or forget the supertyphoons, mind only typhoon Gloria.

My unhappiness over the new PCSO ad was soon dispelled, however, by the realization that it does serve an eminently useful purpose. Which is that it draws attention to the one thing the administration candidates would rather have the world forget, who is GMA. GMA is not a candidate in these elections, but she might as well be so. She is the issue in them in the same way that Marcos was the issue in the 1971 elections and George W. Bush was the issue in last year's American elections. The latter two were also senatorial elections but they became a referendum on the two presidents. GMA's burden is by far the heavier in this respect because her unpopularity comes not just from a widespread perception of misrule but from a widespread perception of having no right to rule.

Except for Mike Defensor who has tried to brave or brazen it out, admitting freely he is a GMA protégé, but trying to score points with Erap's hordes as well by calling for his release, nobody else in the Team Unity ticket wants to be associated too closely with their boss. Or, heaven forbid, to remind the voters with such ardent passion they are her alter ego.

Comes now this ad that does exactly that, an ad that not only grossly intrudes on the Filipino male's (and probably female's as well) favorite pastime, if not secret pleasure, but shows him exactly where his taxes, much expanded by the expanded VAT, are going. It is not to charitable works, such as portrayed in the ad, it is to indulgences like the ad itself, which is nothing more or less than (costly) electioneering. The ad's intention is clearly to convince the public their president cares for them. Its effect is unwittingly to tell the voters: You want more of this, vote for GMA's minions. You want a respite, reject them.

Justice, like the Lord, has been known to work in mysterious ways.

Only option for US-bound nurses

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW THE SANDIGANbayan can allow former President Joseph Estrada to go out and campaign all over the country for his GO team. He is under detention and awaiting the court's verdict on whether or not he's guilty of the heinous crime of plunder. Allowing him to leave Tanay will mean that new rules have been made for this most prominent detainee and these rules are not being applied to others. This would wreak havoc on our jurisprudence.

* * *

Early in the game, it's easy to see how the opposition is greatly disadvantaged in the electoral race. In addition to Estrada's being unable to actively campaign, recent reports say the opposition is having difficulty raising funds—a disadvantage directly related to Estrada's inability to campaign for them. As the campaign shifts to high gear, more funds will be needed, and here rich candidates, like Manuel Villar and Loren Legarda, will have a distinct edge over the rest of the GO team.

Factors such as adequate funds and machinery can directly affect the outcome of the elections. But should the opposition lose, doubtless it would again accuse the administration of cheating, just like in the 2004 elections.

* * *

Dante Ang, chair of the Commission on Filipinos Overseas, is quite right: the decision of the US-based Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) not to accept Filipino nurses who passed in the June 2006 nursing exams, unless they retake the two questioned test items under the supervision of local authorities there, leaves them with two options. Those who want to work in the United States have to retake the test; if they don't want to do so, they can go elsewhere. Obviously, the US nursing authorities do not have confidence in the "recomputation" done by the Professional Regulatory Commission and it's easy to see why: Test 3, where 20 out of 100 review items were put under question, involves Clinical Surgery, while Test 5, of which 90 out of 100 items were said to have been "leaked," deals with Psychiatric Nursing. These are two very important aspects of nursing, on which human life depends.

* * *

Another factor that strongly influenced the CGFNS decision to demand a retake was the fact that most of the major nursing schools in the Philippines, including UP, UST, FEU, UE, De La Salle, St. Paul's, St. Joseph's College in Cavite and St. Louis University in Baguio, were urging a retake of the exams. Had the Arroyo administration followed their recommendation, this problem with the CGFNS wouldn't be with us now. But unfortunately, it chose to listen to the politicians who chose to mouth the popular view instead of working for the long-term benefit.

* * *

Now that we are confronted with the predictable CGFNS stand, efforts should be exerted to bring as many nursing graduates back to the examination room. In this regard, it would encourage the affected graduates if they can review and retake the two exams without having to spend too much money. Many of them, after all, come from poor families who see work abroad as deliverance from poverty. I understand that efforts are now being exerted by the authorities to make the reputable colleges conduct the review, to avoid another leakage, and to make them either free of charge or very inexpensive.

By the way, whatever happened to the prosecution of those people behind the leakage? What about the substandard review centers?

* * *

Last Tuesday, I spoke of our small group's three-day stay in the town of Shihu, Taiwan (at the mountain retreat of the Supreme Master Ching Hai International Association) to celebrate Chinese New Year with thousands of followers, from around the world, of the Vietnamese-born "spiritual teacher" Ching Hai. It was also an occasion for the lady guru to recall the Vietnamese people's gratitude to the Philippine government, under then President Ramos, for its compassionate decision to allow thousands of Vietnamese (who fled in the years following the fall of Saigon in 1975 to the revolutionary forces of Ho Chi Minh) to stay in RP—instead of driving them back to the sea in their boats. The Philippines was the only country in this part of the world to show this unique quality of mercy toward the "boat people" of Vietnam.

* * *

During our brief stay in Shihu, our group, led by Manuel Morato and former Sen. Heherson Alvarez (sponsor of the Refugee Bill in the Senate), was welcomed like heroes by Ching Hai's followers. Both men worked for the permanent stay of the boat people during the Ramos era. They were awarded plaques of appreciation for their help.

During the awarding ceremony, they were asked to stand in front of the huge throng, with dozens of Vietnamese citizens from around the world laying bouquets at their feet and others waving Philippine flags. Had FVR, who signed that refugee bill into law, been there (he was supposed to lead the small group, but was unable to do so as he was reportedly in China for a conference), I can just imagine how he would have been lionized by the grateful Vietnamese and their association brethren from around the world.

As we bade farewell to them all last Tuesday morning before catching our plane for Manila, the lady guru led hundreds and hundreds of her followers in lining the narrow winding passages of the mountain retreat, cheering and waving RP flags in the soft rain and 15-degree centigrade weather. Some of them were plainly emotional. I couldn't help but be amazed at how a gesture of compassion by this Christian nation in Asia toward the boat people of Vietnam hasn't been forgotten despite the passing of so many years.

American nun's Edsa I letters (1)

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

MARYKNOLL MISSIONARY SR. HELEN GRAham has been working in the Philippines since 1967. As a theologian who teaches Sacred Scriptures in two religious institutions, Sister Helen has put her theology into practice and has been very involved in justice and peace issues.

During the volatile season that preceded and culminated in the February 1986 Edsa I people power uprising, Sister Helen chronicled daily events (from Feb. 10 to Feb. 26) in her letters to friends abroad. Here are excerpts:

Feb. 23, 1986

Dear everybody,

Greetings from Quezon City!! As you know Sec. Philip Habib was sent here by Reagan on a "fact finding" mission. He spoke with a number of influential figures and two times each with Ferdinand Marcos and Cory. Cory said that she told him not to bother seeing her if he was going to ask her to join Marcos' government. Habib left around noon yesterday. At around 3:00 p.m. (or so) the drama began…

I got home about 8:30 p.m. to hear the news that Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile and Deputy Chief of the Armed Forces Lt. General Fidel Ramos had announced that they no longer supported Marcos as the lawfully elected president but were supporting Cory, and they and their supporters were holed up in Camp Aguinaldo. They were being interviewed over Radio Veritas—they had called a press conference for the local and foreign press. At around 10 p.m. FM appeared on TV (picked up by RV) and held a press conference also. FM announced that he had aborted a coup and that they had arrested some of the officers involved and he presented two of them who read their "confessions" before the cameras…

Voice of America was airing the situation at 9 p.m. By 6 a.m. the next day, statements were coming from Sen. Kerry and Rep. Solarz. Also a statement was issued from the White House, approved by Reagan, agreeing with Enrile and Ramos concerning the massive fraud in the elections. I am wondering just how connected the US government is to what is happening at the moment. Cory and Doy are in Cebu—they left yesterday morning. They seem to be out of sight at the moment.

At 5 a.m. this morning, 16 armed men entered the RV compound in Bulacan and destroyed their 50-kw MW transformer and three SW transformers. So RV is operating now on a 10-kw emergency transformer in Fairview.

I went to camp Aguinaldo this morning. I just returned so that I could write this letter (10:45 a.m.). Apparently just after I left, Gen. Ramos came out and spoke to the crowd outside—approximately 5,000 people. These people are guarding the military inside. As long as the civilians and the foreign press are outside, FM might think twice about attacking the camp.

In my Feb. 11th letter, in the last paragraph I said that I would not "exclude the possibility of a US-backed coup d'etat on the part of the so-called reform group in the military (which seems to be associated with Enrile…)." You know I feel very uncomfortable about the whole thing. Emotional feeling is HIGH. People follow behind "quick" heroes. RV announced this morning that Ramos and Enrile are the new heroes. Well I cannot forget so many detainees who were tortured, who have disappeared, who have been killed and for whom there was NO JUSTICE COMING FROM RAMOS OR ENRILE… I have close friends who were tortured and killed. If you remember the BBC film, you have there an interview with Enrile concerning the part played by Col. Aure in the torture and death of my friend Puri Pedro in January 1976.

6:00 p.m. Feb 23, 1986

Just came back from Camp Aguinaldo/Camp Crame area. The numbers have swelled from what they were in the morning. Those who had been there during the night (an estimated 30,000) had gone home to sleep, eat and bathe. So we were about 4,000 to 5,000 persons. This afternoon the group had swelled to 200,000 to 300,000 easily…perhaps even more. Edsa (the main city artery), from Farmer's Market to Ortigas Avenue, was blocked off and was like one big grand "block party."

RV is announcing that the marine battalion and tanks that were parked at the Ortigas end are now marching toward Meralco. People are being asked to blockade the area so that they cannot get through. As darkness comes across the skies the situation for those keeping vigil during the night becomes more serious.

Ramos is giving a press conference from Camp Crame recounting the support of the field commanders for them—90 per cent. Both Enrile and Ramos have consolidated their forces in Camp Crame and have abandoned Camp Aguinaldo. The marines camped at the crossroads of EDSA and Ortigas consist of 7 tanks, 14 jeeps and 6 6X 6 trucks with about 500 to 600 men.

7:00 a.m. Feb 24th

Voice of America just announced that the camp is being attacked and that Reagan has announced that he will cut off all aid if the loyalist forces attack the rebellion. So I am going now to the camps to see what is really happening. Even to the last hour FM carries on the lie… Cardinal Sin is speaking on the radio now, asking for calm and quiet and saying a prayer…

RV has announced that there is confirmation that FM and Imelda have left the country. There will be dancing in the streets tonite!!! There is dancing in the streets right now outside of Camp Crame right now!!!

Call from the US says that FM stopped over in Guam and was shown on TV. Also that the US will give him temporary permission to stay in the US. I urge you to write to Congress to let them know that we, the American people, DO NOT want the US to be a place where dictators can find a home. Send him with that fellow from Haiti…let them go to Antarctica or outer space. We do not want them in America!!!

Love,
Helen

(To be continued)

* * *

Send feedback to cerespd@info.com.ph

An assessment

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

In its latest issue, Katipunan Magazine asked me to write on the 1990s. Here's what I wrote.

A FAMOUS ATENEAN, LEON MA. GUERRERO, once wrote of martial law thus, "today began yesterday," by way of explanation and apologia. Today's pragmatic present began yesterday, too. How often have we heard it said in the more idealistic premises of our schools, that in this time of democratic danger, an irony confronts us. For only a free people can afford to be contemptuous of democracy and its liberties. And worse, confusing this contempt with freedom itself, is something that began not in 2005 or 2001, but in 1991, during the happy '90s.

The achievements of the three administrations of the 1990s—the end of Aquino, the Ramos years, and the beginning of Estrada—are embarrassingly brief, in concrete terms: some flyovers, the breaking of PLDT's telecom monopoly, two presidential elections. What the 1990s were really about was the transformation of being Filipino—and the Philippines—from a land of pride and promises, to a land of broken dreams and self-shame.

The limitless optimism of the early Aquino years found itself reduced in scope and ambition to simply hoping it would end peacefully and when promised. And so she—and the nation—breathed a sigh of relief when she stepped down from power; she broke tradition by being the first president to attend a successor's inauguration, but that inauguration after the failed coups of '87 and '89, had become the end-all and be-all of her government. Success was no longer about achievement, it was about surviving long enough to pass the baton.

Ramos achieved the disintegration, and not the creation, of a middle ground in politics. His victory was not about getting a majority, the goal of presidents since 1935 when we had our first national elections. Instead, his goal was to get a little more than anyone else but also to ensure no one got more than the tiny percentage he realistically expected to get. He was elected by 28 percent of the electorate: no president before, or since, has obtained power with so unimpressive a minority.

Dagdag-bawas, too, dates to the Ramos campaign; and his viability as a candidate announced by a group that included military cronies raiding the House of Representatives and exposing the use of its printing press to produce paraphernalia for the leading candidate, Ramon Mitra Jr. He did not fight clean; who would expect anyone else thereafter to fight cleanly?

Then came Joseph Ejercito Estrada who achieved with one electoral victory what 40 years of anti-insurgency had not: the collapse of Communism as a political force and threat. His victory also marked the defeat of the old Edsa coalition, whose candidates couldn't unite, while individually being no match for Estrada, the unrepentant Marcos loyalist.

Estrada's victory, though percentage-wise unimpressive (39.6 percent, which didn't even match forgotten Carlos P. Garcia's 40 percent in 1957), was a landslide in that his votes dwarfed any two of his opponents combined. It was a vindication, in a sense, of the Marcos-era methods and machinery; it was a political rehabilitation that could have come sooner had Imelda Marcos and Eduardo Cojuangco not split their votes in 1992.

Populism is nationalism and it would have been positively revolutionary to have a national leader genuinely held in affection by the people; this was the promise and the potential in Estrada's rise to power. But to be proven a false populist and to betray affection is to court not only contempt, but to risk a gloating reaction. It is to replace optimism with the sense that one has been had, and thus, invite self-loathing. It's fair to say that while no one had illusions about Estrada's morals, no one expected him to be so lazy or to be so greedy—not even in Marcos' cunning, corporate lawyer-way—along the lines of a small-town politician's adoration of rackets.

And so the country vomited out Estrada. Perhaps everything since has been tolerable, but far from appetizing? But the bitter medicine of democracy's defeated idealism—that by political means, we can improve our lives, together—has been the promotion of a dog-eat-dog mentality. We failed together, perhaps, we can succeed individually, and so to hell with democracy, idealism, collective action or any effort to create a common cause.

And so, to assess all three is to assess ourselves. We do not like what we saw, we continue to dislike what we see. Collective self-loathing is what the country has undergone since: and collective contempt for everything that once served as inspiration but which now ends up, at best, a tired, unsatisfying parody of all that came before: Arroyo as the mean-minded, mean-spirited heir (now disowned) of Aquino; Fernando Poe Jr. as the ill-fated and ill-suited successor of Estrada; and Ramos reduced to being an opportunist and no longer—perhaps never, ever—a statesman.

The Philippines has not been an optimistic place since; at least, not since 2001, when People Power reasserted itself but was vanquished in months (January to May). And yet, let's remember it took a decade—1987 to 1997—for the original Edsa to exhaust its possibilities and promises. Edsa II took some 100 days, from January to late April, for its luster to tarnish.

* * *

Concerning my previous column, Willy Prilles Jr. writes in his blog that we need to end "the silent practice allowing congressmen to practically appoint public school teachers to new permanent items that are being funded annually in the national budget… The Iloilo mayors were particularly vocal about this demoralizing practice, complaining that unqualified applicants—backed by the congressman—usually end up getting the available items, to the consternation of more experienced and better suited ones."

Pride and piracy

YOUNG BLOOD

Hans Pura

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

I HAVE ALWAYS KNOWN THAT BUYING PIRATED VIDEO discs is a crime. But because of the outrageous prices of movie tickets, buying bootleg copies of movies seems to have become socially acceptable. What used to be an embarrassing act is now being done by every Tom, Dick and Harry. Sometimes I see priests and even celebrities buying DVDs from the local dealer.

But who can blame them? Why spend P120 to watch a movie once when you can pay P50 to watch the same movie as many times as you want to at your convenience and in your own home? Why buy an original copy of a movie for P800 when you can buy an 8-in-1 DVD for P50?

We Filipinos are a pragmatic people. Many will say that the practical way to watch movies is through piracy. They seem to have a point. Why would a student like me buy original DVDs? I only get money by asking my parents and I'm surely not going to throw it away by buying overpriced products.

It's not surprising that the sales of original DVDs have dropped due to the proliferation of movie pirates. But what surprises me is that original DVD producers haven't done a thing to reverse the trend. If pirates can sell DVDs at affordable prices, can't the DVD producers do the same thing? If pirates can sell a DVD for P50, then I'm sure legitimate producers can also sell it at a price that is much lower than P800, considering that most movies make a lot of money.

Remember that infamous commercial, the one comparing stealing someone's things to buying pirated discs? The advertisement was meant to make you feel guilty. Its message was that the "legal" way to watch movies is going to the cinema.

Well, I have been doing just that for years already. I shell out a couple of hundred pesos a week just so I could watch current movies the "legal" way. I also make sure that I don't buy pirated DVDs of movies currently being shown in theaters.

But given the quality of movies being shown recently, I have been wondering whether to still watch movies in the theaters. Is it worthwhile to spend P100 to watch a non-substantial movie when I can just buy a DVD and give the difference to my church? It won't hurt the movie producers anyway since most bad movies make all the money.

I have been waiting for a certain movie musical ever since it started playing in the United States last Christmas. I wanted to watch it even more when it recently won the Golden Globe for best picture. It is the most-talked about movie in the United States and it still hasn't been shown here. But do you know that I can buy a clear copy of it anywhere where pirated DVDs are sold?

A large sum of money could have been earned by local theaters if only they had shown the movie before it was pirated. If I haven't bought a copy, it is not only because I'm supporting the movie but also because I love the movie industry. I am a movie enthusiast and movies are for me, the highest form of art. They are not just moving pictures but are also inspirations. I am not going to kill them by supporting pirates.

Stopping piracy is going to be tough. The entertainment industry must first convince the people to stop tolerating piracy. I know it looks impossible, but it can be done. They have started showing anti-piracy commercials but those efforts are futile. They should pursue the campaign by lowering the prices of movie tickets in theaters. Filipinos love to watch movies, but many have stopped going to the cinemas because it has become too costly. But if they can afford to watch movies again, then they will probably go to the theaters more often.

It would also help if Hollywood movies were brought to Manila faster. Nothing beats watching movies in a comfortable theater with a big screen.

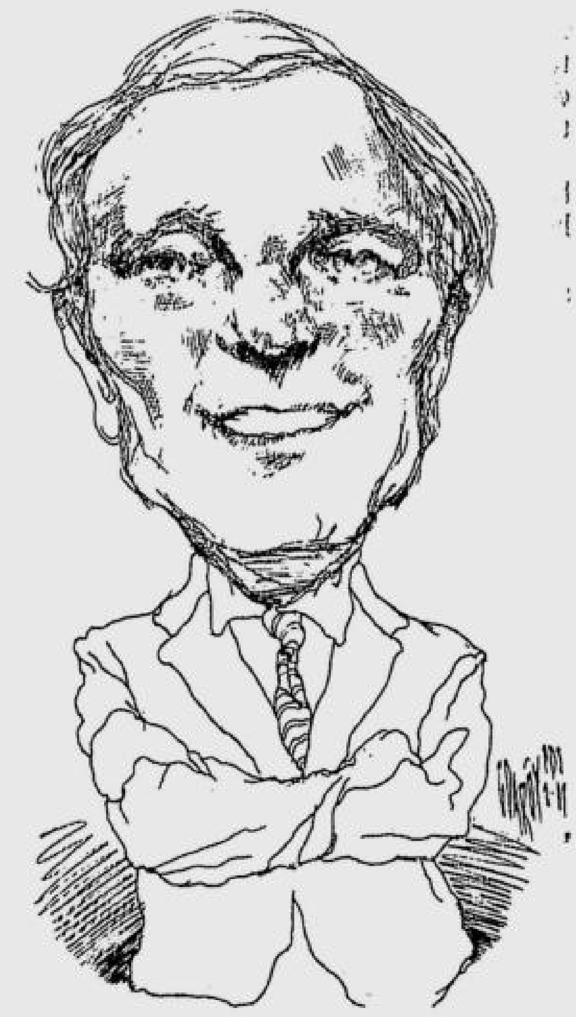
But as soon as the entertainment industry is done with its job, the citizens should do the rest. We must never tolerate any form of piracy. We must work together to prevent the movie industry from dying.

Hans Pura, 17, is a senior at De La Salle Zobel.

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

Send your contributions by e-mail to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph together with your address, age and the school, course and year you're enrolled in or, if employed, the position you're holding and the company you work with. Contributions to Youngblood should not have been previously published.

IN THE NEWS



Philip Alston

Political tyros sound like lying politicos

WITH MOVIE ACTORS AND A BOXER (with no legislative or related experience) running for Congress and parroting the cliché of helping the poor for love of country, I can't help but have nightmares in my sleep.

OK, help the poor; but excuse me, if you want to help the poor, do so with your own money, not with government funds. That should test the purity of your intentions. That should prove your sincerity. If you love your country, please stay away from politics or government posts, or at least prepare for it: have some experience in governance, and come up with a concrete platform of government.

Isn't it scary to watch these political tyros sounding like *trapos*—the unwitting tools of hopeless politicos who rely on the popularity of celebrities to increase their winning chances or advance self-serving goals? To say that actors and boxers cannot run for public office is to take away their so-called constitutional right, a right that is often abused. However, for these celebrities to aspire for public office without preparation and a clear platform of government is to show disrespect for the Constitution; and it is tantamount to exploiting the helplessness of marginalized Filipinos.

Anyway, our Congress is already filled with actor-turned-politicians and politicians-turned-actors. Robert Louis Stevenson once said, "Politics is perhaps the only profession for which no preparation is thought necessary." Maybe he is right. Have we really become that hopeless?

—MIKE BALINES,
is@mikebalines.com

Even pigs deserve kindness and respect

MAY I ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO commemorate the Fire Pig year by not eating pork. Pigs are smart, friendly animals who deserve kindness and respect. When not confined in filthy factory farms, pigs enjoy playing, sunbathing, exploring and communicating with one another. More than 20 vocalizations have been identified for different situations. Piglets learn to run to their mothers' voices, and mother pigs sing to their young while nursing.

But in factory farms, mother pigs are kept in crates that are so small that the pigs can't turn around or lie down comfortably. They are impregnated time and time again, and their piglets are taken away from them soon after birth. The piglets' teeth and ears are cut, their tails are chopped off, and male piglets have their testicles ripped out. No anesthetics are used during these painful procedures. In slaughterhouses, pigs are bled to death, in full view of other terrified animals.

Honor pigs by not eating them. Visit www.GoVeg.com for a free vegetarian starter kit, which includes information on tasty pork alternatives.

—ROCHELLE REGODON,
campaigns manager,
People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (Peta) Asia-Pacific,
RochelleR@PETAAsiaPacific.org

Same billionaires, same 'trapos'

IN HIS WELL-PUBLICIZED, RECENT interview with Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, INQUIRER reporter Gil Cabacungan asked: "Isn't it a concern for you, Ma'am, that the billionaires during the time of Marcos and Ramos are also the same billionaires now?"

Cabacungan should have asked a second question: "Isn't it a concern for you, Ma'am, that the *trapos* during the time of Marcos are still the same *trapos* now?"

—DOMINGO ARONG,
domingoarong@yahoo.com

LETTERS

Still no funds for veterans

IN 1999, WHEN OUR FATHER WAS still alive, we filed an application for his veteran's benefits at the Philippine Veterans Affairs Office (PVAO). A stroke victim, he was at that time already bedridden. He died a few years later without enjoying the benefits due him as one who risked his life in the service of his country.

With his death, we applied with the PVAO for accrued pension. After sometime, we discovered that our application could not be found and we had to reapply, going back to square one, wasting some more effort, time and borrowed money to reconstitute and refile the same.

After a few more years of patient waiting, we (living sons and daughters) were advised to submit authenticated birth certificates from the National Statistics Office. We already had complied with these requirements in 2005, even earlier.

The last time we followed up our application in 2006, we were told that there were no funds yet for accrued pensions and then merely advised to inquire again in the next months or years, for how long we do not know. How sad, indeed, that a lowly veteran would be deprived of his benefits up to his last breath and beyond while the powerful and influential elite are feasting on taxpayers' money with abandon.

Well, if only as a consolation, we have received a token of P10,000 as burial benefit, which was not enough to cover the cost of my father's burial—meaning, we were left with debts from the burial expenses and these we hope to settle once the accrued pension is finally released. Will someone help us, as well as those heirs of veterans who are similarly situated?

—FLORIBEL H. LAPPAY,
66-68 Interior Howmart Rd.,
Baesa, Quezon City

Lessons from Bert Tawa and Nora Aunor for Pacman

MANNY PACQUIAO IS IDOLIZED BY FILipinos, without exception. Even my 4-year-old grandson calls himself Pacquiao. Now the boxer climbs into the political arena—unfamiliar grounds insofar as he is concerned. Doubtless, by this foray of his, he will polarize the people—not to mention what could happen if he loses, which is an enormous possibility.

Look at what happened to Bert Tawa Marcelo. He was idolized by the people of Bulacan where he was born and grew up. Relying on his outstanding popularity as a comedian, he plunged into politics (untested waters for him) by running for governor of the province. What happened next is now history. Marcelo lost, not only the gubernatorial race but also all his savings in the bank. Overcome by self-pity and regret, he fell sick and died of complications in the United States.

Let me say in Filipino a sincere advice for Pacquiao: *"Huwag kang pa-uto sa mga politiko."* The moment you lose, not one of them will provide you moral support in your state of misery and self-pity.

Another glaring example is Nora Aunor. Like Pacquiao, she was an icon in her own right. But some bootlickers made her believe that because she was so popular in the entire country, her provincemates would be proud to have her as governor. Nora believed them. She plunged into the murky ocean of politics. And so it came to pass that she who united all the people of Camarines Sur divided them. Her opponents denigrated her, emphasizing the fact that before winning the Tawag ng Tanghalan singing contest which catapulted her to national fame and popularity, all she knew was to sell drinking water to train passengers. And they dug out other issues against her.

After losing the election and her savings, she realized the truth about politics. Last thing we heard, she was facing a charge in the United States for possession of illegal drugs.

We can cite to Pacquiao other examples, but the similar experiences of Marcelo and Aunor should suffice. Politics is a tricky business. Countless innocent, unsuspecting celebrities succumb to its lures, only to regret the day they allowed themselves to be used by unscrupulous politicians.

All Filipinos love Pacquiao because of the honor and pride he has given our people. But please, let him not divide our nation.

—MARCIAL R. PIMENTEL,
former governor and congressman,
Camarines Norte

Doha Round: Making trade work for developing countries

COMMENTARY

Pascal Lamy

I AM BRINGING GOOD NEWS TO MANILA: The members of the World Trade Organization family have resumed negotiations in Geneva. Since the beginning of this year, there have been calls from all over—including those recently raised at the Asean Summit in Cebu last January, which was hosted by President Macapagal-Arroyo—to restart the Doha Development Round negotiations, stressing both the importance and urgency of reviving and bringing them to closure. Political leaders around the world clearly want us to get fully back to business, although we in turn need their continuing commitment.

Thus, there is now a window of opportunity to bring to a close within months the first Development Round in WTO trade negotiations. Each WTO member's interest in its own negotiating position is understandable, but it is now time for everyone to exercise pragmatism. If the talks are to reach a conclusion, all WTO members have to show flexibility. No one should be asked to undertake disproportionate commitments. Each country must make its contribution, with the big players contributing more than the smaller and weaker ones.

What is already on the negotiating table is two to three times more than what was achieved in the Uruguay Round in 1995. Agriculture export subsidies will be completely eliminated, domestic trade-distorting subsidies by rich countries will be seriously cut, and tariffs on agriculture products will be slashed. There will be bigger cuts in industrial tariffs, in particular on high tariffs applied by developed countries on products such as textiles, clothing and footwear. New rules on trade facilitation will expedite release and clearance of goods. All this in addition to improved anti-dumping procedures, more transparency in regional trade agreements and limits on fisheries subsidies.

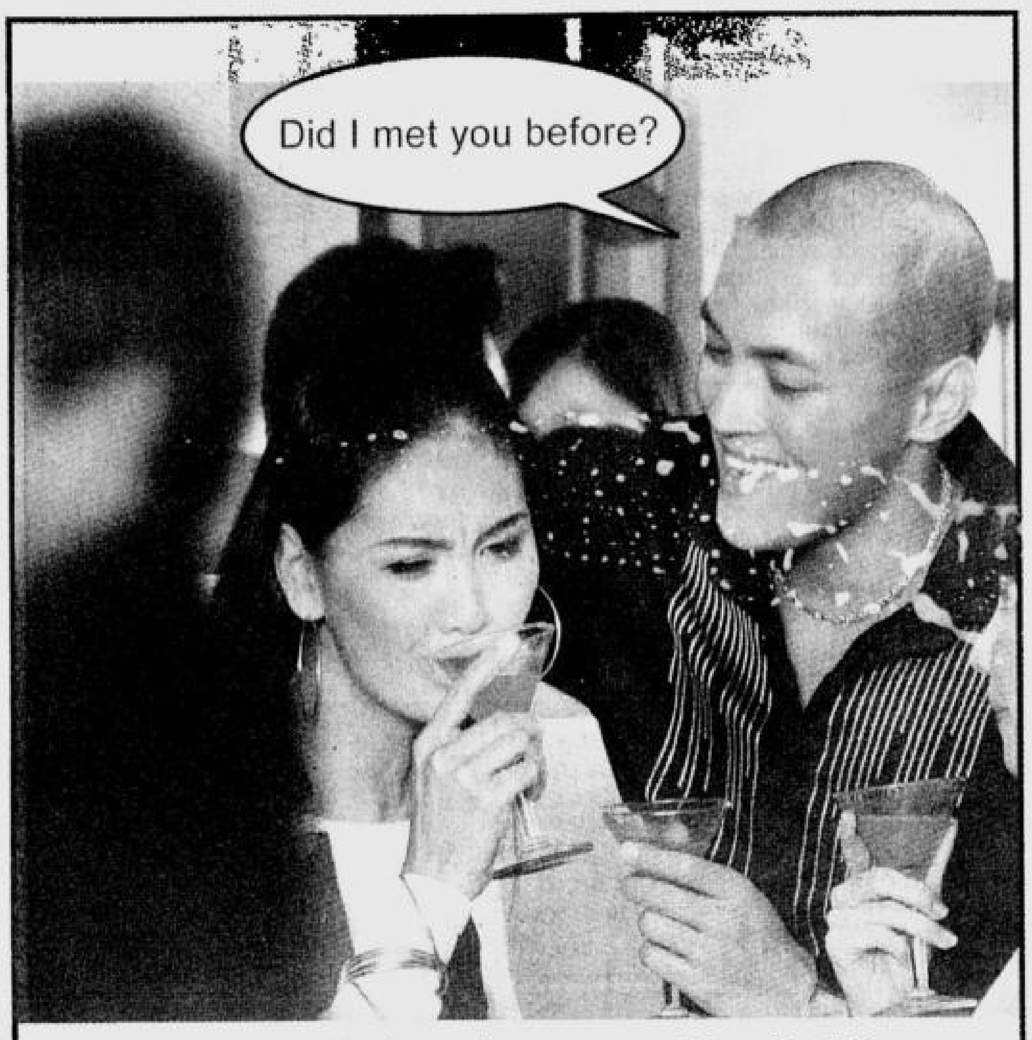
A fundamental aspect of the current Development Round is to correct some of the remaining imbalances in the existing trade rules in favor of developing countries and to improve rules that will provide all members, particularly developing country-members, with real market opportunities.

Given the Philippines' reliance on trade for its economic growth, a freer multilateral trading system is surely in its best interest. This country will be able to harvest all the new market opportunities while at the same time benefiting from the specific flexibilities afforded to developing countries, particularly, in the area of agriculture and industrial products.

But the opening of trade alone will not be enough. We also need a substantial package of Aid For Trade to help build the necessary capacity of developing countries to address domestic bottlenecks and translate the potential of the Doha Round into a reality.

This is no time to procrastinate or reflect, this is a time for action. I am confident that the Philippines will display its leadership and make a constructive contribution to the WTO's effort to finish the last lap of the Doha Round.

Pascal Lamy is director general of the World Trade Organization.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‘Losing’ firm’s execs got ₱66M in pay, bonuses

From page A1

According to her, government nominees on the company’s board of directors have “dissipated” the firm’s resources, resulting in net losses in 2004 and 2005, despite the fact that Philcomsat has no meaningful business activity except to invest its cash in return for interest income.

“I’ve never seen a more corrupt bunch of people,” she said in an interview with the INQUIRER.

Sequestered then, controlled now

The downfall of the Marcos dictatorship in 1986 sent the government on a mad scramble to recover what was then estimated at $10 billion in hidden wealth of the late strongman.

At the forefront of this recovery effort was the PCGG, whose creation was the first official act of President Corazon Aquino with the signing of Executive Order No. 1 on Feb. 28, 1986, only four days after Marcos, his family and associates fled into exile.

Wielding extraordinary powers under a revolutionary government, President Aquino then signed Executive Order No. 2 on March 12, 1986, freezing all assets and properties of the Marcoses, their close relatives, subordinates, business associates, dummies, agents or nominees, “pending the outcome of appropriate proceedings … to determine whether such assets or properties were acquired … through improper or illegal use of funds belonging to the government of the Philippines.”

One such firm that came under the control of the government and the PCGG was Philcomsat through its parent firm, the Philippine Overseas Telecommunications Corp. (POTC).

In 1986, IRC and Mid-Pasig Land Development Corp.—two firms owned by Marcos associate Jose Y. Campos—were surrendered to the government and deemed sequestered by the PCGG.

Among the holdings of the two firms were 5,400 POTC shares of stock, originally belonging to businessman Potenciano Ilusorio.

In 1987, Ilusorio filed for the recovery of these shares, entering into a compromise deal with the government years later for the latter to retain 35 percent of POTC’s shares—the very same shares that Bildner claims is being used by PCGG nominees to “plunder” the firm.

Lines of accountability

Under the PCGG’s control, the Philcomsat has paid the government close to P800 million dividends from 1986 to 1997, when the last payout was made.

Since then, however, the company’s fortunes started to decline, dipping further under a set of board appointees named by then President Joseph Estrada, and continuing to this day.

The salaries and benefits of government nominees on the boards of PCGG-sequestered firms are clearly stated in Memorandum Circular No. 40, which states that these directors are limited to fees of P120,000 annually and up to P3,400 per month in allowances.

Yet, from 2003 to 2005, the Philcomsat’s board—which includes PCGG nominees—paid out P66.2 million in salaries, benefits and bonuses, or about P22 million each year, for an average of P2.45 million per director—well above the mandated cap for government appointees.

Businessmen familiar with good governance principles say the problems plaguing Philcomsat is symptomatic of a bigger problem that afflicts the entire PCGG nominee system.

“There is a problem of accountability,” said Institute of Corporate Directors executive director Jonathan Juan Moreno. “It is not a lack of accountability, but misplaced accountability.”

He explained that in many cases, directors appointed to the boards of sequestered firms are loyal not to the company they help steer but to their appointing authorities or patrons, in this case, the President of the Republic of the Philippines or whoever pushed his or her name through the appointments process.

Bled dry

Moreno said that directors in state-run firms can always claim to act “on behalf of the people,” but pointed out that this rarely works because the concept is so vague.

“Instead, they should act in the interests of the long-term good of the company,” he said.

Unfortunately, for Philcomsat, its finances show a very different picture.

“The PCGG people have been bleeding our company dry,” Bildner said, who has brought Philcomsat’s case before the Senate in the hopes of breaking the government’s stranglehold on the firm.

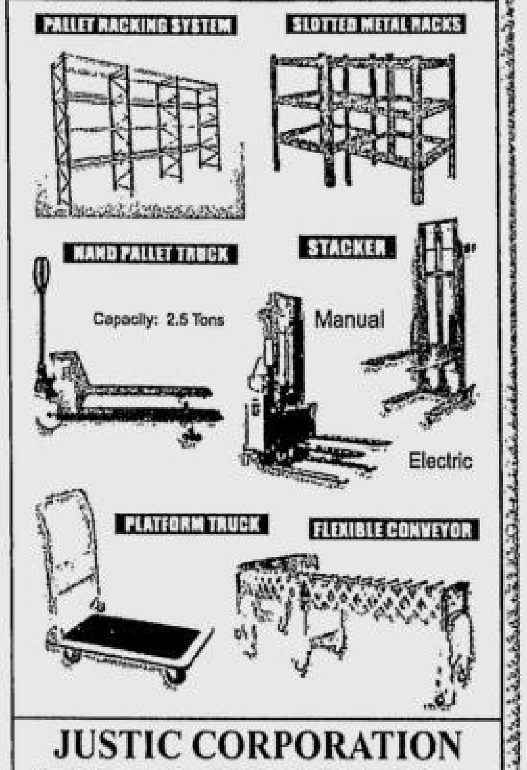
But accusations of malfeasance and misdeeds have failed to ruffle the feathers of PCGG Commissioner Ricardo M. Abcede.

As the head of the PCGG’s asset management division, oversight responsibility over the agency’s 261 sequestered firms falls on him.

“This is just an intra-corporate dispute, with each side accusing the other side of dissipating the assets,” he told the INQUIRER in an interview last week.

For Bildner and her allies, however, the PCGG remains the single biggest obstacle to the resolution of Philcomsat’s 20-year saga, which they are hoping to resolve by liquidating or privatizing the firm.

“The PCGG is the major impediment to privatization,” she said in a separate statement. “The nominees will not let go of their lucrative positions in PHC, and the PCGG will not support privatization as they, too, partake of the generous cash gifts and perks from PHC.”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RAMOS

SALONGA

CHAVEZ

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₱61-B loot recovered; no one jailed

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mated to range as high as $10 billion. The money recovered included Swiss bank accounts that amounted to $688 million, including interests on the original $366 million deposits.

Hundreds of civil and criminal cases stemming from the plunder committed in the last two decades were filed, but not a single person has been imprisoned.

Around 40 major companies remain sequestered with PCGG nominees participating in their management. More than 200 other firms are under sequestration without PCGG managers. *(See related story this page.)*

“The PCGG was conceived in grace, but it was born in sin,” says Francisco I. Chavez, a human rights lawyer named by President Aquino as her solicitor general to prosecute the PCGG cases against the Marcoses and their cronies. “It is a wonder why it has not been buried in sin.”

He grants that the PCGG should be credited with “some recoveries.”

Botched chance

“In the main, it has betrayed its mandate,” says Chavez. “It botched the chance of obtaining expeditious justice and vindication for the Filipinos.”

He says that during the “revolutionary period” between the inauguration of Aquino as President through the adoption of the new Constitution in September 1987 the new administration could have moved swiftly.

“There was nothing that could have stopped the revolutionary government from issuing confiscation and seizure orders on the basis of prima facie evidence on the illegal provenance of the properties of the Marcoses and some 415 cronies, associates and cohorts,” says Chavez.

The requirements of constitutional order and incompetence hobbled the litigation process. Persons who had died were included in the complaints. Government lawyers had to explain why summonses could not be served. Hundreds of lawyers for the defendants raised a host of issues.

Abolish it

“Very petty incidents eventually reached the Supreme Court, which also took some time to resolve,” says Chavez. As the cases dragged on, sequestered companies remained in PCGG hands. Some companies were milked dry, others went bankrupt, others became a source of largesse for the administration managers.

The short of it is that, as Senate Majority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. put it, the PCGG has exceeded its mandate and it is now time to abolish it.

“It is inexcusable for PCGG to sit in the board of these sequestered firms at this time. The purpose of their sitting in the board was to see to it that funds were not dissipated and to try and establish the identities of the real owners of these establishments,” he says.

“If after 21 years, they still haven’t found out who the owners are, they’ll never be able to do so under the circumstances,” says Pimentel. “My take is abolish the PCGG and transfer these firms to the Asset Privatization Trust.” The APT is under the Department of Finance.

In his book, “Presidential Plunder,” Salonga justifies litigation of cases of ill-gotten wealth. Among the options considered was one adopted by Mao Tse Tung: Confiscate the wealth of the enemies of the people and line them up against the wall after a sham trial.

Hundreds of thousands of people were reportedly killed in the purges in China.

Sequester until adjudication

In the end, Salonga and his commissioners decided to sequester suspected fruits of plunder, place them under government custody on the basis of prima facie evidence, give the purported owners a fair shake until there was “final judicial determination of the ownership of said assets.”

In mid-1988, Chavez had a slam bang fight with the PCGG then headed by Ramon Diaz, long a trusted Salonga associate.

“My move was impelled by undeniable proof that the PCGG fiscal agents were virtually robbing the sequestered firms assigned to them,” says Chavez.

Media had a field day on the scandal that raged for three months. All of the Diaz commission members subsequently resigned following the nasty squabble. Chavez dropped the PCGG cases but stayed on as Aquino’s solicitor general.

Chavez recalls an incident in late July or early August of 1988 when he was summoned to the Palace along with the PCGG commissioners and saw a resignation letter that he and Diaz were supposed to sign.

New trail of decency

“I told myself if this will be shoved under my nose for me to sign, I will refuse,” he recalls. “I wanted to blaze a new trail of decency and honesty in government. So, I would have challenged the President to dismiss me because by doing that people will say a public official was fired for exposing anomalies in government.”

Chavez returned to private law practice in 1992. He says he lost track of the “horror stories created by the PCGG” but has not stopped going to court to testify against the Marcoses and to question PCGG deals with their cronies.

Salonga, in his book, says the accusations and counter-accusations between Chavez and Diaz damaged the PCGG and it has not been able to recover from it since.

For all the claims of wrongdoing by PCGG agents, none has been brought to court to account for misfeasance.

“People should be held accountable for misdeeds in government,” says Pimentel. “People who steal money from government steal money from the people.”

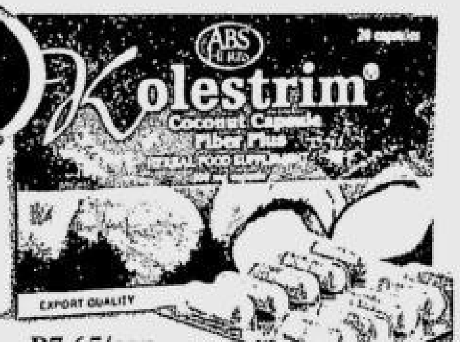
Realm of immutable

And what has PCGG achieved through 21 years of its existence?

Says Chavez: “We have recovered some money. True. But in the realm of the immutable, we have never progressed.”

He points to efforts by the Fidel Ramos administration to negotiate with the Marcoses, a move Chavez denounced saying, “you do not compromise with thieves.” He says Joseph Estrada attempted to settle and the Arroyo administration tried to cover up with a pliant Ombudsman. He mentions bank accounts of Irene Araneta whose husband is a relative of First Gentleman Mike Arroyo.

Paraphrasing Theodore Roosevelt, he adds, “We have as a nation joined the ranks of the poor spirits who neither suffer much nor enjoy much because they live in that gray twilight that knows not the distinction between good government and corrupt government.”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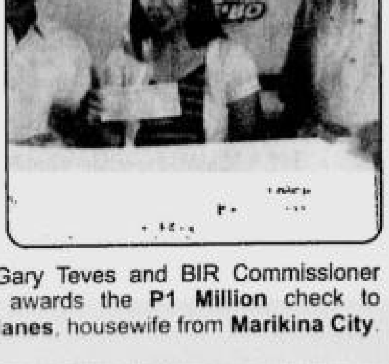

Finance Secretary Gary Teves and BIR Commissioner Jose Mario Bunag awards the **P1 Million** check to **Ms. Michelle Magallanes**, housewife from **Marikina City**.

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BRITISH PM Tony Blair met the troops in Basra, Iraq, in this file photo taken Dec. 22, 2004.

INQUIRER PHOTO

Australia rules out withdrawal

CANBERRA—AUSTRALIA RULED out withdrawing troops from Iraq on Wednesday despite growing calls for Prime Minister John Howard to follow the lead of Britain's Tony Blair by setting a timetable for a pullout.

Australia, a staunch US ally, was one of the first nations alongside Britain to commit forces to the US-led war in Iraq, and still has about 1,400 military personnel in and around Iraq with up to 70 more military trainers to be deployed soon.

Media reports said Prime Minister Blair planned to withdraw up to 3,000 of his country's 7,100 troops from southern Iraq.

Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said he understood the British troop presence would be cut to 5,200.

"It's a perfectly natural reduction to their numbers," Downer told Australian Broadcasting Corp. television.

Howard said he had no plans to cut the 550-strong Australian battle group providing security in neighboring areas.

"I don't think it follows from that that there should be a reduction in our 550. I mean you have got to maintain a critical mass and to do the job according to our defense advice, you need that," Howard told reporters in Perth.

His comments will be welcomed by US Vice President Dick Cheney, due to visit Australia this week to thank Canberra for its support in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Australia's handling of Iraq is a growing problem for Howard's conservative government, which is struggling in the polls with national elections due in the second half of 2007.

Center-left Labor opposition leader Kevin Rudd has taken an eight-point lead in the polls on the back of a promise to withdraw Australian combat forces from Iraq if he wins power.

A poll published on Tuesday found 67 percent of Australians either want Howard to set a withdrawal date from Iraq or pull Australian forces out immediately.

Labor and the Senate's minority parties, the Greens and Australian Democrats, said Blair's move left Howard out of step on Iraq.

"The Howard government is clearly confused about its Iraq policy, which is based on what the US wants, not what is in Australia's interests," Greens leader Bob Brown said.

Underscoring the growing opposition to Australia's involvement in Iraq, protest groups said they planned demonstrations when Cheney arrived and newspaper editorials urged Howard to reexamine his Iraq commitment during the visit.

"We think it is time for Mr. Howard to say enough's enough to the man who more than anyone is responsible for creating the Iraq disaster on the basis of distorted intelligence and inflated dreams of remaking the Middle East," the Sydney Morning Herald said in an editorial. *Reuters*

Britain . . .

From page A1

troops in central Iraq, Blair told the House of Commons.

"The actual reduction in forces will be from the present 7,100—itself down from over 9,000 two years ago and 40,000 at the time of the conflict—to roughly 5,500," Blair said.

Support, training

He told lawmakers that "increasingly our role will be support and training, and our numbers will be able to reduce accordingly."

Blair said Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki had agreed to the plan.

Dependent on Iraqi capability Britain would draw down further, "possibly to below 5,000" once a base at Basra Palace [now **British troops' headquarters–Ed.**] is transferred to Iraqi control in late summer, Blair said.

"What all of this means is not that Basra is how we want it to be. But it does mean that the next chapter in Basra's history can be written by Iraqis," Blair said.

Denmark, too

Denmark also announced Wednesday it will withdraw its 460-strong contingent from southern Iraq by August. The decision had been made with the Iraqi government and Britain, Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen said.

Blair said "the situation in Basra is very different from Baghdad—there is no Sunni insurgency, no al-Qaida base, little Sunni on Shia violence," adding that the southern city is nothing like "the challenge of Baghdad."

The Iraqi capital had suffered from an "orgy of terrorism unleashed upon it in order to crush any possibility of it functioning," he said.

"If Baghdad cannot be secured, the future of the country is in peril. The enemies of Iraq understand that. We understand it," Blair said.

'Sign of success'

US President George W. Bush and Blair talked by secure video link Tuesday morning about the proposals, US National Security Council spokesperson Gordon Johndroe said. Bush views Britain's troop cutbacks as "a sign of success" in Iraq, he said.

"While the United Kingdom is maintaining a robust force in southern Iraq, we're pleased that conditions in Basra have improved sufficiently that they are able to transition more control to the Iraqis," Johndroe said.

Besides the United States, Britain and Denmark, the major partners in the coalition include South Korea (2,300 troops), Poland (900), Australia and Georgia (both 800) and Romania (600), according to the Brookings Institution.

The US, meanwhile, is implementing an increase of 21,000 more troops for Iraq, mostly in and around the capital. Analysts claim there is little point in boosting forces in the largely Shiite south of Iraq, where most non-US coalition troops are concentrated.

Security vacuum?

Yet as more countries draw down or pull out, it could create a security vacuum if radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr stirs up trouble.

A British withdrawal is not likely to have much effect on the stepped-up US operation in Baghdad or the war against the Sunni-led insurgency focusing on Anbar province west of the Iraqi capital.

"We want to bring our troops home as well," Johndroe said. "It's the model we want to emulate, to turn over more responsibilities to Iraqis and bring our troops home. That's the goal and always has been."

Blair, who has said he will step down by September after a decade in power, has seen his foreign-policy record overshadowed by his role as Bush's leading ally in the unpopular war.

As recently as late last month, Blair rejected opposition calls to withdraw British troops by October, calling such a plan irresponsible.

"That would send the most disastrous signal to the people that we are fighting in Iraq. It's a policy that, whatever its superficial attractions may be, is actually deeply irresponsible," Blair said on Jan. 24 in the Commons. *AP*

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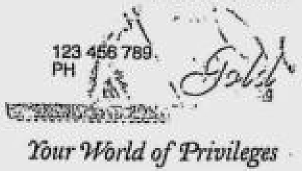

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UN blames military for political killings

From page A1

dered or reported missing since Ms Arroyo came to power in 2001. But the military says most of the deaths could be attributed to internal fighting in the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the New People's Army (CPP/NPA).

'Almost total denial'

"The AFP remains in a state of almost total denial (as its official response to the Melo Report amply demonstrates) of the need to respond effectively and authentically to the significant number of killings which have been convincingly attributed to [it]," Alston said at a news conference, reading from a press statement on his initial findings.

Immediately afterward, he left for the Ninoy Aquino International Airport. He flew out of Manila at 12:15 p.m. on board a Korean Air plane bound for Seoul, where he will take a connecting flight to New York.

According to Alston, Ms Arroyo showed "good faith" when she formed the commission chaired by retired Supreme Court Justice Jose Melo in August last year.

"But the political and other capital that should have followed is being slowly but surely drained away by the refusal to publish the report," he said.

The Melo Commission submitted its findings to the President in January. After initial reluctance, saying the report was "by no means complete," Malacañang has released the report to Alston, the European Union and the Philippines' Commission on Human Rights.

Alston said he had met with Ms Arroyo and her senior members of her Cabinet, military, security and judiciary officials, as well as human rights advocates, representatives of civil society organizations, and relatives of alleged victims of extrajudicial killings.

He said his "formal role" was to report his findings to the UN Human Rights Council and to the Philippine government. He said he expected his final report to be ready within the next three months.

'Unconvincing evidence'

Alston said that while Ms Arroyo had acknowledged the "seriousness" of the problem, other government officials had reacted with "incredulity" and dismissed reports of the killings as "propaganda."

He said military and other government officials had "relentlessly pushed" the theory that the killings were the result of a purge within the CPP/NPA.

"[But] the evidence offered by the military in support of this theory is especially unconvincing," Alston said.

He said concerned sectors, including the party-list group Akbayan, had suggested that of the 1,227 killings blamed by the military on the CPP/NPA, not even 10 percent could be attributed to the latter.

According to Alston, the military is like an alcoholic who refuses to admit addiction to alcohol.

"The guy says, 'Look, I'm not an alcoholic, I'm not. I just have a few occasional drinks and sometimes I like it. But that's it. It's not a problem.' That's just how I see the military at this stage," Alston said, adding:

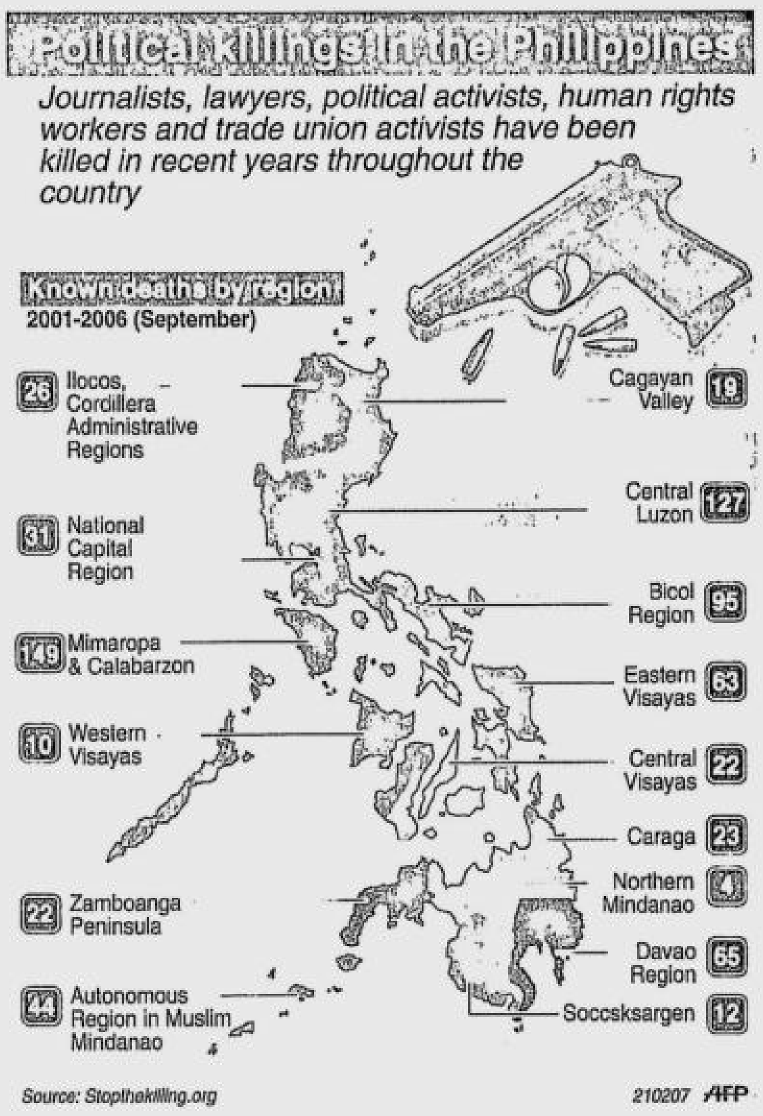
"The President needs to persuade the military that its reputation and effectiveness will be considerably enhanced, rather than undermined, by acknowledging the facts and taking genuine steps to investigate."

Counterinsurgency

Alston, who has taken part in human rights missions in Sri Lanka, Nicaragua, Lebanon and Nigeria since the 1970s, suggested a reevaluation of the Philippine government's counterinsurgency strategy.

"In some areas, an appeal to hearts and minds is combined with an attempt to vilify Left-leaning organizations and to intimidate leaders of such organizations. In some instances, such intimidation escalates into extrajudicial execution," he said.

He also said "the enduring and much larger challenge" was to "restore the various accountability mechanisms" put in place by the Philippine Constitution and Congress, "too many of which have been systematically drained of their force in recent years."


Political killings in the Philippines
Journalists, lawyers, political activists, human rights workers and trade union activists have been killed in recent years throughout the country
Known deaths by region
2001-2006 (September)
26 Ilocos, Cordillera Administrative Regions
31 National Capital Region
149 Mimaropa & Calabarzon
10 Western Visayas
22 Zamboanga Peninsula
44 Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
Cagayan Valley 19
Central Luzon 127
Bicol Region 95
Eastern Visayas 63
Central Visayas 22
Caraga 23
Northern Mindanao 4
Davao Region 65
Soccsksargen 12

Source: Stopthekilling.org

210207 AFP

Virtual impunity

As well, Alston called for the strengthening of the witness protection program (WPP) in order to address "the problem of virtual impunity that prevails."

He described the WPP as "impressive—on paper."

"The present message is that if you want to preserve your life expectancy, don't act as a witness in a criminal prosecution for killing," he said.

Alston also called for an acceptance of "the need to provide legitimate political space for leftist groups."

He said that despite the party-list system and the repeal of the Anti-Subversion Act, "the executive branch, openly and enthusiastically aided by the military," had been "trying to impede the work of the party-list groups and to put in question their right to operate freely."

'Small victory'

But Pedro Gonzales, a leader of the militant fisherfolk group Pamalakaya, yesterday said he took little comfort in Alston's initial findings.

Gonzales, 62, told Agence France-Presse that Alston's findings were a "small victory," and that he doubted the bloodshed would stop.

"The killings will continue. There is this policy to silence us," he said from an undisclosed location in Manila.

According to Gonzales' account, he was smoking a cigarette outside his modest house in Quezon province two years ago when two men casually walked up to him and pumped nine bullets into his head and body.

He fell to the ground in a pool of blood as neighbors ran to his side. "I didn't know I had been shot until I could feel my own blood oozing out of my body," he told the wire agency.

Gonzales miraculously survived, but his life since has been one of constantly moving and looking over his shoulder.

Ambush survivor

The attempt on his life by a "death squad" left him with deep emotional scars, as well as an impaired nervous system that now forces him to walk with a severe limp.

Gonzales said the ambush was related to his activism.

The military has denied involvement in the attack, but Gonzales said his relatives and friends saw intelligence agents trying to enter the hospital lobby where he was taken after the ambush.

He said that when the agents saw his family had spotted them, they quickly withdrew.

"They failed to finish the job and I am still lying low, moving from one place to another so as not to be detected," he said.

Gonzales was among those interviewed by Alston, and his case is now among the voluminous documents that the UN rapporteur would use in preparing a final report.

"It's a good thing there was international pressure that led to his UN investigation. But between now and the final report, I'm telling you, more will die," Gonzales said.

Vindication

Reached for comment on the phone, Karapatan secretary general Marie Hilao Enriquez said: "We feel that we have been vindicated by what [Alston] said, that allegations of extrajudicial killings are not trumped up but rather credible."

Enriquez added: "We are happy and thankful that he went around to meet and listen to the victims ... His visit opened up cases and brought out witnesses."

At the Naia, staff members of Korean Air said Alston was due to arrive in the United States at 7:20 p.m. of Feb. 21 (New York time).

They said he was assisted by an officer of the Department of Foreign Affairs when he checked in.

Public affairs officers of the Manila International Airport Authority said Alston no longer passed through the Dignitaries Lounge, where special accommodations had been prepared for him. *With reports from Agence France-Presse and Tarra Quismundo*

Defense, AFP silent on report; Gonzalez says Alston brainwashed

From page A1

ta said the Office of the Press Secretary would distribute copies of the Melo Report to members of the Malacañang Press Corps this morning.

Ermita reminded reporters at his regular news briefing that the report was "preliminary" because the commission had tried but failed to hear the testimonies of the families of victims of extrajudicial killings.

"But because of the clamor of everyone to have access to it," Ermita said, the report would be "made available" along with letters of reaction of the Armed Forces chief of staff, Gen. Hermogenes Esperon, and retired Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan.

Ermita also said that on Bunye's recommendation, the Palace may direct retired Supreme Court Justice Jose Melo and the members of the Melo Commission to face the media to expound on their report.

'Sonamagun'

Gonzalez said he believed that Alston had a preconceived notion of the Philippine situation even before arriving here:

"Once somebody from that body (the UN Human Rights Council) comes here, basically he has a preconditioned mind. Whom did he first talk to? He talked to the leftists. He allowed himself to be brainwashed first by the leftists. I think among the last he talked with were the leftists."

Gonzalez also bridled at Alston's recommendation that the government's Witness Protection Program be strengthened.

"There are many witnesses who have surfaced, so you can tell that sonamagun after this that he does not know what he's talking about," the justice secretary said, adding:

"He is critical of us, but he's just a rapporteur. He's just a hired man from the UN in certain specific projects. *(Please see story on Page A1.)* There are many countries he cannot even enter. *Pasalamat nga siya nakapasok siya dito* (He should be thankful he was even allowed to come here)."

Gonzalez likewise said he found the Philippines too accommodating to people like Alston.

"It's our problem really because we're too kind. We let everybody in and visit our kitchen and toilets," he said.

An official at the Department of National Defense said it would leave it to Malacañang for now to issue a statement or reaction to Alston's initial findings.

The official, who asked not to be named for lack of authority to speak on the matter, said Esperon might call a news conference today.

Asked for a reaction to Alston's statement that the military was in a state of "almost total denial" of the killings, Armed Forces spokesperson Lt. Col. Bartolome Bacarro said it was "beyond the AFP to comment right now."

But he also said that the AFP was standing firm on the evidence it had earlier presented to Alston and the UN team on the supposed purging being done by the CPP and its armed wing, the New People's Army.

"We have shown them documents that the NPA had been purging and, as a matter of fact, [the CPP/NPA] had admitted [to it]. And that was why some leaders apologized to the people killed ... That, by itself, is proof that they were into this purging," Bacarro told reporters.

He also pointed out that Esperon had committed the military's cooperation in the separate inquiries of the UN team and the European Union.

MAN LEFTISTS LOVE TO HATE: Retired Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan reportedly figures prominently in the Melo report as well as the UN rapporteur's final report. AFP

NO WORD yet from AFP Chief of Staff Hermogenes Esperon on the Alston report's strong indictment of the military. JOAN BONDOC

Forensic evidence

The Philippine National Police was quick to defend the work of Task Force Usig, which it had formed to look into the extrajudicial killings.

PNP spokesperson Chief Supt. Samuel Pagdilao said the task force had used a combination of forensics and testimonial evidence to solve the crimes.

Alston lamented at yesterday's press conference that the police had failed to extensively use "forensic investigation" and relied on witnesses' testimonies.

When the witnesses refuse to cooperate, the police probe is terminated, he said.

But Pagdilao said: "The (PNP) Crime Laboratory is included in the composition of Task Force Usig. They used not only testimonial evidence but also forensic evidence. This is essential in any investigation."

He said part of the investigation involved the analysis of bullet slugs and DNA samples.

Task Force Usig had maintained that contrary to the claim of militant groups, the number of leftist activists killed was actually 115.

It had said that many of the killings it was investigating were related to the supposed purging in the CPP/NPA communist movement.

PNP Deputy Director General Avelino Razon, former head of the task force, had also accused militant groups of "bloating" the list of those killed.

The militant group Karapatan claims 800 killings since President Arroyo assumed office. The INQUIRER count is 273 victims.

More time

Pagdilao said Alston probably needed more time in the country to come up with a better picture of the killings.

"I don't think 10 days is enough to investigate these cases," Pagdilao said.

But he said there was "something common" to the findings of the task force and of Alston's team: "Some of the killings are attributable to a purge in the local communist movement."

He also said Alston's visit "might have a good effect in that it has encouraged witnesses to come out."

Pagdilao insisted that Alston's statements were not a rebuke of the PNP's efforts to solve the killings.

"The task force was formed to have a focused investigation with a dedicated force, funds and logistics to serve this purpose. And they have done everything to find solutions to these cases. Many of the cases are considered solved and filed [in court]," he said.

Pagdilao also said the work of Task Force Usig had "not stopped."

He said that Alston's final report could also be helpful in the remaining cases.

Full cooperation

Ermita said the President made the decision to release the Melo Report after Alston called on her in Malacañang late Tuesday.

The INQUIRER learned that Alston and the European Union had been furnished copies of the report, on the condition that these should not be leaked to the media.

Alston told Ms Arroyo that his mission had been "very useful," and that he had expressed appreciation for the government's full cooperation with his team, according to Ermita, who was present in the meeting along with several top Palace officials.

The President responded by vowing to utilize the "resources" of the government in the "investigation and prosecution of the perpetrators of the killings," Ermita said.

"This is the only thing we can do to help the CHR in its work. We cannot tell [its members] what to do since they are constitutionally independent," she said.

Alston also discussed the "difficulty" of solving the killings when the main witnesses had been reluctant to speak to the Melo Commission or the CHR, Ermita said.

He said Alston noted that the UN might not have the resources to send investigators to the country, but that he expected the EU to have such resources.

Ermita said Alston admitted that in the country, the complainants had "a wide range of choice of interlocutors to speak of, such as the CHR, even if they do not trust some parts of government."

He then suggested to the President that her administration spend more funds on the investigation and prosecution of the killers, Ermita said. *With a report from Christine O. Avendaño*

Melo stands by commission's findings

By Fe Zamora

FORMER SUPREME COURT Justice Jose Melo yesterday said he was standing by the finding of the fact-finding commission on extrajudicial killings that certain military officials should be held accountable by virtue of "command responsibility."

"But definitely, *hindi aabot kay* (it will not reach) President Arroyo as commander in chief," Melo said in a phone interview.

He said the military accountability would be limited to "immediate commanders" of soldiers who were linked to the killings, like retired Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan, former commander in Mindoro, Samar and Central Luzon.

Melo said he was glad that Malacañang has finally decided to make public today the findings of the the fact-finding body which he submitted to President Macapagal-Arroyo last month.

"Good, good," he also said in reference to the initial findings of UN Special Rapporteur Philip Alston.

But Melo said the President had already begun implementing the recommendations he had made in his 89-page report.

He said these included the creation of special courts to try the extrajudicial killings and the strengthening of the witness protection program.

Melo said the Armed Forces had also begun holding an awareness program on command responsibility for military officers.

"The lower-ranking officers are being made aware of this doctrine," he said.

Who is this man?

From page A1

Before his appointment as rapporteur in 2004, Alston worked as consultant to, among others, the International Labor Organization, UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) and UN Children's Fund (Unicef). Special rapporteurs are individuals assigned by the UN Commission for Human Rights to examine, monitor, advise and report on human rights situations. They may be given a country mandate (which allows them to focus on specific countries) or a thematic mandate (like Alston, who focuses on extrajudicial executions).

Currently, the UN has bestowed 28 thematic and 13 country mandates on certain persons.

No pay

Special rapporteurs do not receive monetary compensation for their work but are provided personnel and logistical assistance by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Alston served from 1978 to 1984 as human rights officer at the UN Center for Human Rights in Geneva, Switzerland. From 1991 to 1998, he chaired the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

At the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, he was elected chair of the first meeting of the heads of all international human rights courts and committees.

Professor

Alston has taught law at the European University Institute, University of Georgia, Australian National University, University of Michigan and Harvard Law School.

He completed degrees in economics and law at the University of Melbourne and master's and doctoral degrees in law at the University of California at Berkeley School of Law.

Cyril L. Bonabente, Inquirer Research

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SALCEDA

Palace role seen as cops keep 'jueteng' unmolested

LEGAZPI CITY—THE INVOLVEMENT of Malacañang in the continued operation of the illegal numbers game "jueteng" is starting to rear its ugly head as the underworld lottery persists unmolested by police in Albay and other provinces in Luzon.

In Albay, draws are held three times a day despite demands by local officials and Church leaders for the police to stop jueteng and despite government claims that the small town lottery was picking up.

A bettor from Barangay San Roque in this city, who refused to be identified, said jueteng draws are held morning, noon and afternoon. She said the numbers 3 and 5 won in one of the draws on Monday.

Senior Supt. Herold Ubalde, Albay police director, said the police have not gone full blast in the campaign against jueteng because of the confusion created by STL, a government lottery designed to replace the illegal numbers game.

One and the same

He said jueteng and STL are using the same system, people and materials.

"We don't want the STL to be used as a front for illegal gambling. But we also have to substantiate with evidence the possibility that the same people involved in jueteng are also involved in STL," Ubalde said.

On Monday, ABS-CBN aired a report about jueteng operations in Albay showing footage of jueteng draws in Legazpi City, Tabaco City, and Polangui towns, all in Albay.

It also presented an interview with an informant only identified as Bong, a former bet collector, implicating 1st district Rep. Edcel Lagman, an ally of President Macapagal-Arroyo, and Presidential Chief of Staff Joey Salceda in jueteng operations.

Bong claimed that a certain Carding worked as a jueteng collector for Lagman, while a certain Junjee collected for Salceda's brother, Rey.

Denials

Salceda and Lagman denied their involvement.

Salceda, who served as Albay representative before he was appointed chief of staff of Ms Arroyo, said he has already ordered the Bicol police to stop the proliferation of jueteng in the region while Lagman said he was not involved, in any way, in the illegal numbers game.

Lagman added that he even received a letter from a former police chief in Albay saying that jueteng no longer existed in the province.

Ubalde, however, said jueteng operations were running when he assumed his post as provincial police director on Jan. 12.

Ubalde said even before Lagman called him up Monday night telling him to stop jueteng in Albay, police have already stepped up their campaign against jueteng. *Ephraim Aguilar, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

'Impossible,' Bong Pineda says of team-up with Lapids

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Suspected "jueteng" lord Rodolfo "Bong" Pineda ruled out a possible alliance between his wife, Lilia, and incumbent Gov. Mark Lapid as President Macapagal-Arroyo won't make public her endorsement of either Lilia or Mark as her candidate for governor of her home province.

"Everything is open. The doors are not shut down or closed," Lapid told reporters in reply to a question on the possibility of a Lapid-Lilia Pineda team-up, with him either keeping the main slot or giving way to Pineda to run as her vice governor.

But Bong Pineda said a possible alliance with Lapid was an "impossible" idea.

He said what was clear on Tuesday, when the interview was held, was that the administration coalition "respected the equity of the incumbent" when it chose to give his father, Sen. Manuel "Lito" Lapid, the task of organizing the campaign rally of the administration's 12 senatorial candidates in Pampanga.

In effect, Lapid said, the coalition recognized the Lapid leadership in the province.

On the same day, Pineda held her birthday celebration in Lubao town, with Ms Arroyo as her guest. Ms Arroyo and the Pinedas hail from Lubao and are close friends.

THE TIES that bind bring President Macapagal-Arroyo to her home province to attend the birthday celebration of Lilia Pineda, who is running for governor of Pampanga. Pineda, whose husband Bong was suspected of financing "jueteng," is a close friend of the President.

LYN RILLON

Told that the President did not endorse his candidacy or raise his hand during the Team Unity rally in Pampanga, Lapid said: "I did not expect the President to do that. The rally was for the senatorial candidates."

In the program at the Bren Guiao Convention Center here, the 28-year-old governor was made to sit next to Vice President Noli de Castro. He was given the task of leading the rally's opening prayer.

Toward the end of the program, and on the second time that the President raised the hands of the Team Unity candidates, Senator Lapid was seen squeezing himself between Zambales Gov. Vicente Magsaysay and De Castro.

The elder Lapid then pulled his son's hand and made him stand next to De Castro. This lasted no more than a minute. The President was looking at the crowd when Senator Lapid sprung the stunt for his son.

In the interview, the governor did not say if he and his father were actually exerting efforts to woo Pineda to their camp.

The senator was known to have gone out of his way by asking Gabriel Claudio, the President's adviser for political affairs, for help in reconciling with the 14 Lakas-CMD mayors who moved to the Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino (Kampi), Ms Arroyo's party.

The senator had tried tapping also Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson, said to be a business associate of Bong Pineda, in resolving the conflict.

The alliance broke loose in November when the elder Lapid, as provincial Lakas-CMD chair, rejected three proposals by the Pampanga Mayors League.

The league asked that Pineda's son, Dennis, the mayor of Lubao, be taken as the governor's running mate; that eight mayors who have completed their terms be included in the slate for board members; and that non-Lakas-CMD members be accepted into the ruling party.

Sought for comments on Tuesday night when he dropped in at the birthday party of his wife, Bong Pineda said a reunification or even a Lapid-Pineda team-up was not likely to happen.

"*Malayo na yun* (That's already impossible)," he told the INQUIRER.

Bong Pineda begged off from making further comments, saying his wife was running her own campaign and not him.

Lilia Pineda appeared somehow irked at the thought of a team-up.

"If the Lapids claimed they are strong and popular, why are they dropping hints that I should join them? I won't. I will run with Yeng (Vice Gov. Joseller Guiao) as my colleagues in Kampi had planned," she said.

For her, the cause of the rift was not the Lapids' rejection of her son.

"We really could not anymore work with them because of the many irregularities in the quarry collection, health services and infrastructure projects," she said.

The Lapids have strongly denied these, urging Pineda and Guiao to show evidence that would stand in court.

Claudio on Tuesday said the coalition's arbitration committee has still to decide on its official candidate for governor in Pampanga. *Tonette Orejas, Inquirer Central Luzon*

Donations keep coming for landslide survivors

By Jani Arnaiz
Inquirer Visayas

NEW GUINSAUGON, ST. Bernard, Southern Leyte—Exactly a year since the landslide that buried the Guinsaugon village in St. Bernard, donations still come in, this time in the form of livelihood projects and infrastructure.

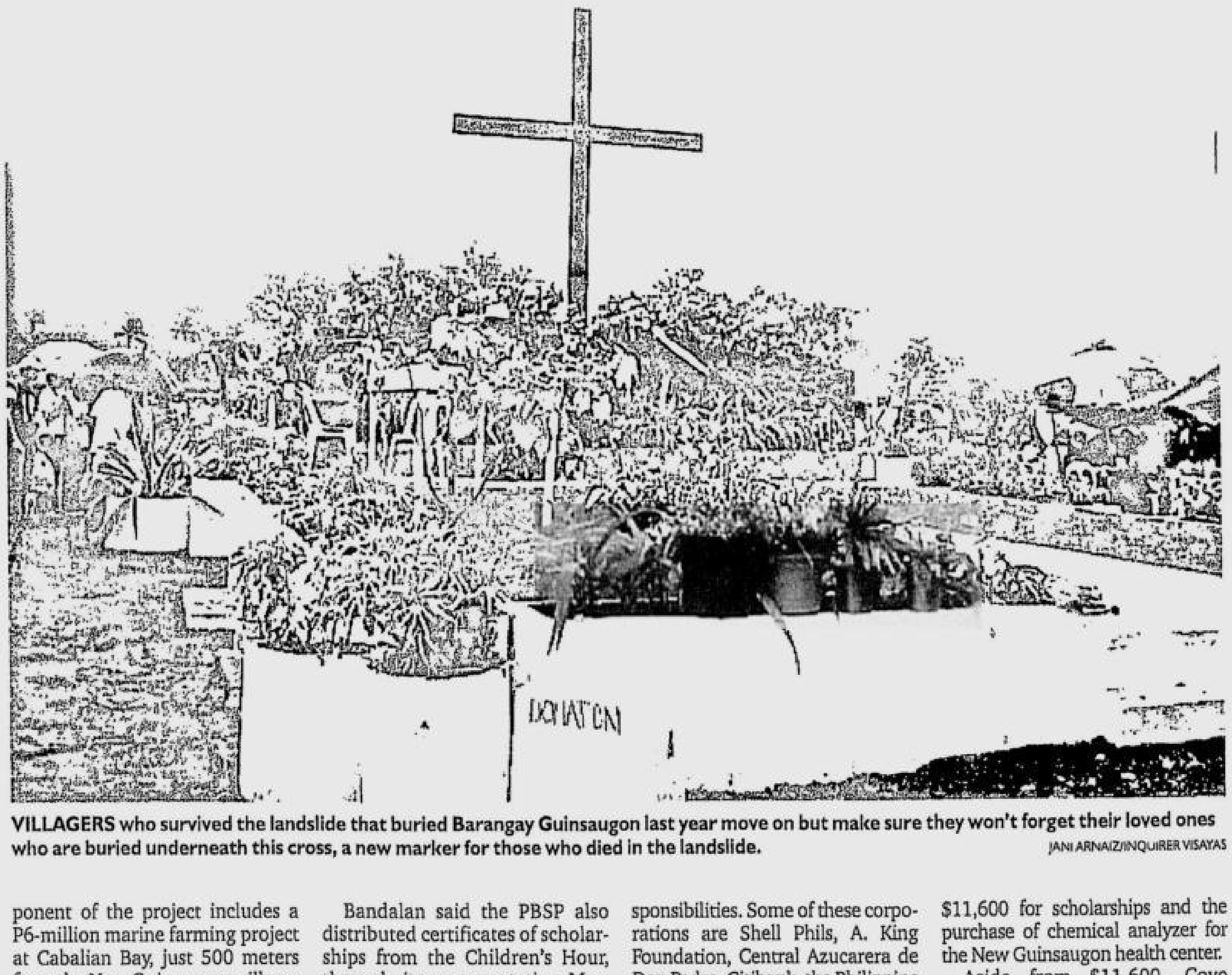
Different organizations, such as the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP) and the Hawaii-based Congress of Visayan Organization (Covo), have given donations that would enable the survivors of the landslide to have their own income.

Under its Southern Leyte Rehabilitation Program, the PBSP launched last Friday its livelihood and basic services projects for the survivors of the landslide.

In a message, PBSP deputy executive director Ramon Derige said the projects would help the survivors start anew with their lives.

Southern Leyte provincial administrator Genis Murallos, who represented Gov. Rosette Lerias, said the provincial government was very grateful for PBSP projects because "we have yet to put in place the livelihood component of the rehabilitation efforts for the survivors."

PBSP project officer Rimmon Bandalan said the livelihood component of the project includes a P6-million marine farming project at Cabalian Bay, just 500 meters from the New Guinsaugon village; a livelihood and productivity center for the making of hollow blocks; a virgin coconut oil production project; and the construction of a high school building.



VILLAGERS who survived the landslide that buried Barangay Guinsaugon last year move on but make sure they won't forget their loved ones who are buried underneath this cross, a new marker for those who died in the landslide.

JANI ARNAIZ/INQUIRER VISAYAS

Bandalan said the PBSP also distributed certificates of scholarships from the Children's Hour, through its representative Margarita Hopkins, a Maasin native now living in Hawaii.

He said several companies have contributed to the PBSP as part of the companies' corporate social responsibilities. Some of these corporations are Shell Phils, A. King Foundation, Central Azucarera de Don Pedro, Citibank, the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company, Cemex Corp. and Wellmade Corp., Bandalan said.

Earlier, Covo, through its president, Hopkins, also donated $11,600 for scholarships and the purchase of chemical analyzer for the New Guinsaugon health center.

Aside from $11,600, Covo gave another $5,000 to Sr. Rosario Aya-ay of Cristo Rey Regional High School, which is in St. Bernard town proper, to start a micro lending facility.

Rizal casino faces closure for unpaid taxes, permit lack

CALAMBA CITY—FOR FAILING to settle at least P21 million in local taxes and permits since it started its operations almost two years ago, a resort hotel-cum-casino is facing closure orders after the municipal government of Binangonan, Rizal sued its officials "for trying to deceive the local government."

In a statement sent to the INQUIRER yesterday, municipal treasurer Romulo Dorado said they have filed charges against officials of EastBay Resort Inc. (EBRI) for its refusal to honor their financial obligations since it started operations in March 2005.

Dorado said they have likewise filed for a petition for temporary restraining order and a writ for preliminary injunction before the Binangonan Regional Trial Court to stop EBRI from operating the Fiesta Casino inside the posh resort located in Barangay Bilibiran.

Dorado said EBRI officials had also duped the local government when they told the Binangonan local executives that they intend to put up a hotel and resort in the area.

But a month after its opening, the local government officials discovered that instead of operating a resort, EBRI had put up a casino inside its facility.

"However, after the completion of the recreational facility, the hotel and resort facility did not turn out as its main attraction. (W)hat was claimed as a hotel and resort facility turned out to be (a casino)," he said.

After learning about the casino operations, Binangonan Mayor Cesar Ynares and the local officials immediately ordered EBRI officials to get hold of the necessary permits before they can legally operate its business.

But instead of submitting the necessary documents, Dorado said EBRI furnished them a copy of a memorandum of agreement that they supposedly signed with the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (Pagcor) which allowed them to operate a casino.

The EBRI executives likewise argued that its business was exempted from paying local permits and taxes for four years being a duly-registered tourism ecozone enterprise.

But when Ynares asked Philippine Economic Zone Authority (Peza) Director General Lilia De Lima about EBRI's claims, she said that "casino operations is not in any way part of the program for the promotion of eco-tourism."

With this discovery, Dorado said they were more resolved to close down the casino and collect the financial obligations that EBRI owed the local government. *Marlon Ramos, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

INQUIRER *Southern Luzon*

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Lipa in the writings of a National Artist

By Niña Catherine Calleja
Lipa City

THE CITY GOVERNMENT OF LIPA plans to establish a creative writing program to provide grants to deserving proposals for the publication of original literary works either in English or Filipino.

It also plans to establish a library showcasing the works of award-winning poet, playwright, critic and National Artist for Literature Bienvenido Lumbera.

The aim is to make Batangas students acquainted with Lipa as seen from the eyes of the man who was born and raised in the city.

Lumbera, who was proclaimed National Artist for Literature in April 2006, was welcomed by his former high school classmates and city residents with a motorcade and an exhibit of his books during a homecoming Feb. 15.

The homecoming had the theme "Ang Lipa sa Aking Paglikha" (Lipa in my creation).

Lumbera talked of how his hometown played a pivotal role in his literary works.

Many of his literary pieces narrate and mention stories that took place in Lipa.

"Lipa has largely contributed to my literary development," Lumbera said in Filipino.

He noted that a writer's experience in his hometown becomes part of his or her writing.

"My town became a factor in my education because I learned to be observant of my environment and to determine the textures, scents, and colors of leaves and flowers in my surroundings."

These details, which later became sources of material for his literary pieces, emerged from the memories of his experiences, he said.

Many of his winning works also touched on his childhood, departure and return to this hometown.

'To be a good writer, a student must read various literary works and start writing his own experiences'

NATIONAL Artist Bienvenido Lumbera (second from right) with Mayor Vilma Santos-Recto and the Lipa City Council. NIÑA CATHERINE CALLEJA

Images of youth

Lumbera was just 1 year old when his father Timoteo fell from a fruit tree, broke his back and died. A few years later, his mother Carmen, suffered from cancer and died.

Young Bienvenido, who was fondly called Beny, and his older sister were taken care of by their paternal grandmother, Eusebia Teru.

One of Lumbera's unforgettable experiences was swimming in the creeks despite his grandmother's forbidding.

Another experience was depicted in a poem titled "Ang Batang Tinanghali Ng Gising, Sa Pagtila ng Unang Ulan sa Mayo."

The poem provided details of his search for mushrooms at the start of the rainy season.

"Kumidlat-kumulog kagabi,
at parang nanaog sa hagdang gato
ang tikatik ng ulang umaanas
pagbaba sa balisbisan.
Sa madilim na parang at kakahuyan
isa-isang nagsipagbukas ng payong
ang mga kabuti–mamunso at mamarang."

Lumbera said it was common for children in Lipa back then to look for mushrooms after the first rains of May. Afterwards, they would cook and eat the mushrooms.

A poem from his childhood, "Umaga sa Lipa," illustrates one of the mornings he experienced in Lipa before the Japanese war.

Lumbera recounted the days when he started studying in Padre Valerio Malabanan Elementary School. For being naughty, his teacher sometimes spanked him with a stick.

In high school at the Mabini Academy, he met his English teacher, Jose Alex Katigbak, who introduced him to various literary works and spurred him to read novels, short stories and poems from then on.

Former classmates

Dominador Katigbak, a former classmate and childhood friend of Lumbera, clearly remembered their picnics near the river.

Lumbera was a consistent honor student from elementary to high school and his potentials in writing and composition were already evident at that time, Katigbak said.

He always helped his classmates in their English assignments. "He helped as if he was doing it for himself," he said of Lumbera's kindness. Katigbak said he did not expect that his friend would go this far.

Departure and return

In 1950, Lumbera went to Manila to study journalism at the University of Sto. Tomas. After college, he studied at the Indiana University for his post-graduate degree.

Lumbera used to write and read American literature, but through his dissertation, "Tagalog Poetry, 1570-1898: Tradition and Influences in its Development," he returned to the roots of his native literary traditions.

On Lumbera's return to his hometown, he said he instantly felt as if he was experiencing a "nightmare of cultural reentry."

He said he was bored when he came back as he wanted to fast track developments in Lipa.

Because of this feeling, he wrote, "Agawdilim sa Lipa" where he described the dullness of the city.

"Matamlay na orasyon.
Hindi naman sinasadya,
kumalampag ang kampana.
Hinaplit ng hangin
ang kahungkagan ng kalye,
nagbangon ang gabok.
Siniserang lunsod,
araw na upos."

On his other visit to Lipa, he witnessed how a fire razed a house. Getting all the reactions of the residents, he wrote the poem, "Sunog sa Lipa" (Fire in Lipa).

Lumbera said the poem spoke of the residents' anxiety.

"In all of my writings, I just expressed my feelings and observation on my environment and the relationship of people to society," he noted.

Lumbera taught literature at the Ateneo de Manila University in 1960 and became an activist and a staunch critic of president Ferdinand Marcos afterwards.

Apart from teaching, he wrote plays, poems and criticisms that tackled poverty and corruption. He joined rallies and organized students, teachers and artists.

Government soldiers arrested and detained him for almost a year in 1974.

In Lumbera's talk, he encouraged Lipa's high school students to take the path leading to literature.

"To be a good writer, a student must read various literary works and start writing his own experiences," he said.

Saving lives even when there's no fire

By Delfin Mallari Jr.
Lucena City

TO THE ORDINARY PERSON, A fireman's job involves responding to fire alarms, connecting hoses to the nearest fire hydrants, holding nozzles and directing water streams towards a raging fire.

But for Fire Officer 1 Joseph Luzentales, 30, being a fireman means "saving lives even when there's no fire, rescuing them in the face of imminent danger and bringing them to safety."

Luzentales, a member of the Lucena City Fire Station, was recently honored "Fireman of the Year" by the Bureau of Fire Protection in the Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon) region.

"Saving human lives is a fulfilling and gratifying task even if it also means putting our lives on the line," said the firefighter, also a father of a 2-year-old son and a devout member of the Iglesia ni Cristo.

'Saving human lives is a fulfilling and gratifying task even if it also means putting our lives on the line'

Luzentales remembers several dangerous incidents that tested his devotion to his job .

On Dec. 6, 2005 during a flash flood in a village near Iyam River at the city outskirts, Luzentales and his buddy, Fire Officer 3 Erwin Paris, rescued an old couple, Florentino and Evelyn Asenan, from the rampaging river currents.

"The couple tied themselves atop a tree to save themselves from the current which swept away their shack. We had to make a quick decision to save them or else they would also be swept away," Luzentales recalled.

After tying themselves with ropes and other safety harnesses, Luzentales and Paris immediately prepared the rescue with fellow firefighters as backup.

"It was a risky rescue operation. But we had to do it to save the couple. And with God's help and the efforts of the whole firefighting rescue team, we successfully brought the old couple to safety," said Luzentales, a Bachelor of Science in Industrial Engineering graduate of the Manuel Enverga University.

FIREMAN Joseph Luzentales with wife Ingrid and son Josh. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Luzentales entered the force eight years ago.

"I abhor office work. I prefer challenging outdoor activities, which is probably the reason I chose to become a fireman. Contrary to the people's perception, this job also entails excitement even when we are not putting out fires," he explains.

On the evening of Aug. 20, 2005, Zandro Blanco, a neighborhood drug dependent, climbed the steel tower of a telecommunications firm near the local fire station located in the farthest end of Perez Park.

Armed with a knife, the person threatened to harm anyone who would climb near him.

"He was very 'high.' There was extreme fear and suspicion in his mind at that time. But we had to do something or he would slip and fall to death," recalled Luzentales.

Luzentales climbed the tower along with another fireman and started to strike a friendly chat with Blanco.

"We jammed with him for several hours, listening to his gripes against the world until the effect of the drug had subsided. And without further coddling, he himself volunteered to go down and end his tripping," he recalled.

On Sept. 5, 2005, Luzentales along with fellow firemen and rescuers also helped vehicular accident victim Lawrence Capistrano, get out from his wrecked van before he run out of blood from severe injuries.

He said they arrived at the accident site a little bit late. "We had to immediately act and make a decision to save the victim," he recalls.

Armed with special equipments, Luzentales and his group successfully moved out the victim from the smashed vehicle and rushed him to the nearest hospital.

"The public should learn that in cases of emergency, road accidents and other incidents where precious lives have to be rescued, they should not only call the police. They should also call the nearest fire station. There are always standby certified rescuers ready to respond," he stressed.

"We first respond to emergency situations until a medical unit has arrived," he added.

When there's no fire to put out and no emergency situations to attend to, Luzentales and fellow local firefighters busy themselves conducting seminars and presentations on fire prevention and other public safety issues.

"We also regularly conduct fire drills in schools, offices and other big buildings and train fire volunteers from the community to assist us when the need arises," he said.

His proud wife Ingrid admits that she sometimes fears for the safety of her husband.

"But I know he's good and careful. I once saw him in action," she said.

Ingrid recalled that during one of their leisurely strolls when they were not yet married, a fire broke out in one part of the city. Being a firefighter at heart, Luzentales with his girlfriend in tow, rushed to the scene to help his colleagues.

"That's the only time when I personally saw him performing his job. And I'm proud of him," she said.

Receiving the prestigious award last month was a surprise to Luzentales, whose elder brother Jayvee is also a firefighter.

Days before he received the award for his courageous acts as a firefighter, Luzentales said he was ordered by Lucena fire station chief Insp. Nelson Jalbuena to proceed to Camp Vicente Lim in Canlubang, Laguna.

"He did not tell me the real reason. At first I thought that probably I will only receive a plaque in the junior fireman category because that's the category where my name was submitted. I even brought along my wife and kid for a little leisure trip," the fireman said.

The Lucena City government recognized Luzentales' heroic deeds and also commended him in a ceremony in front of City Hall employees.

Luzentales stressed that he shared the award with every member of the local fire station. "The fireman's job is a team effort. I could not claim the honor alone. The whole station is part of it."

"If my son Josh will also enter the force when he grows up, I would gladly welcome him. A firemen's job is a noble profession."

Gin Kings a win shy of crown

GAME TOMORROW (*Araneta Coliseum*)
7 p.m.—San Miguel vs Barangay Ginebra

By Musong R. Castillo

PREPARE THE BANNERS AND chill the champagne—or gin—for it seems that there is no stopping Barangay Ginebra at this point.

Mark Caguioa waxed hot in the third and the Gin Kings' defense bled San Miguel Beer dry for most of the final quarter last night on the way to a 94-82 victory at the Araneta Coliseum that moved them within a win of nailing the Talk 'N Text Philippine Cup.

Ginebra worked its way out of a tight game in the first half, but there was no stopping the Kings when they finally established control in the third period. The win gave them a 3-2 lead in the best-of-seven series —one which the Beermen opened with two straight routs.

"We're so close and yet so far," coach Jong Uichico said. "We still need to win one game and San Miguel will not give it to us. We will have to work hard for it on Friday (in tomorrow's sixth game).

"Today's game could have gone either way," Uichico added. "Our game plan is just working, I guess."

Last night's win was the third straight for the Kings, and they had to work harder on this one as it did not come in the same lopsided manner as the first two, which they won by an average of 32.5 points.

Mark Caguioa scored 17 of his 28 points in the final two periods, giving the Kings their biggest lead, 69-55, with a triple late in the third before completing the hatchet job with clutch baskets in the stretch.

Named on Friday as the tournament's Best Player, Caguioa iced the game by stealing an outlet pass by Danny Ildefonso and connecting on a tear drop off Dorian Peña for 84-73 with 3:12 to play.

Lordy Tugade nailed consecutive three-pointers to breathe life into a San Miguel Beer offense that was held to just five points in the first nine minutes of the final quarter and trimmed Ginebra's lead to 84-79. But Caguioa scored on a drive with 66 seconds remaining for additional buffer.

Should Ginebra go on to win the series, this will mark only the fifth time that a team won a seven-game series after trailing, 0-2.

The scores:

BARANGAY GINEBRA 94—Caguioa 28, Helterbrand 26, Salvacion 12, Hatfield 10, Menk 7, Tubid 5, Reavis 4, Mamaril 2, Abarrientos 0

SAN MIGUEL BEER 82—Seigle 24, Tenerio 17, Hontiveros 11, Racela 10, Tugade 9, Pena 4, Adducul 3, Gonzales 2, Ildefonso 2, Wilson 0, Calaguio 0.

Quarters: 25-all, 42-37, 72-68, 94-82

Late Sports
More Sports stories on A25 to 28

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2. Department of Health. Health Statistics. Ten Leading Causes of Mortality by Sex, Number, Rate/100,000 Population and Percentage, Philippines 2003. Available at: www.doh.gov.ph. Accessed 29 January 2007.

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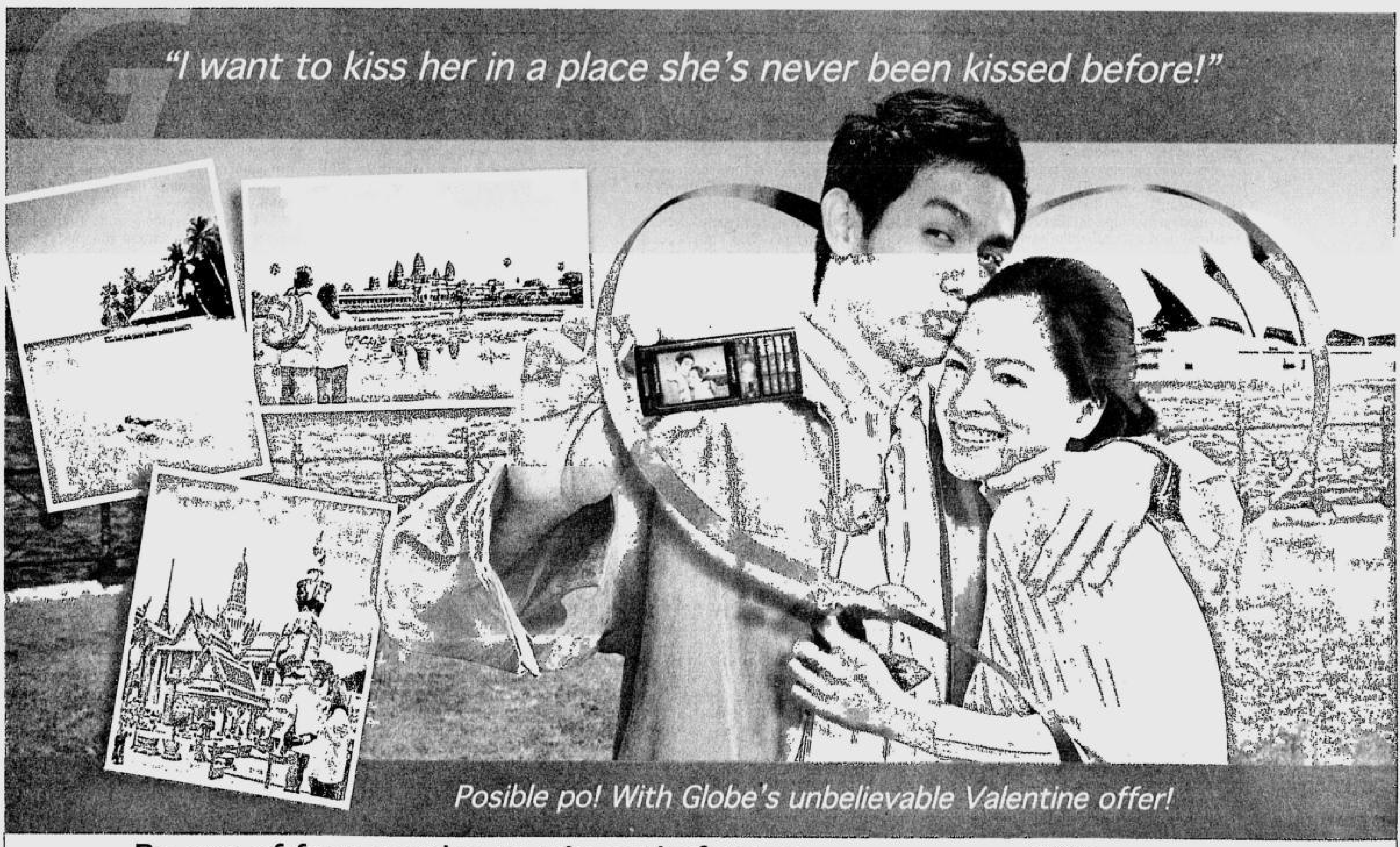
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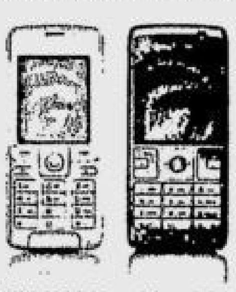

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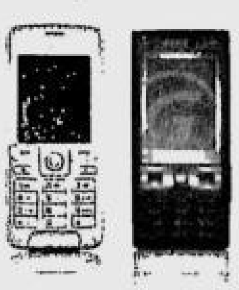

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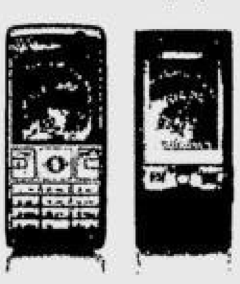

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Cops, bank execs join fight vs rob gangs

Lack of background check, security cameras pointed out in dialogue

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THE PASIG POLICE HAVE ADvised bank managers and owners not only to install adequate security gadgets in their establishments but to subject all their employees and guards to a thorough background check.

No bank robberies have been reported in the city since last year but there has been an increasing number of cases involving customers who were robbed immediately after they came out of the bank with huge sums of money, Pasig police chief, Senior Supt. Francisco Uyami, said yesterday.

"We are appealing to bank officials to also help secure their clients," Uyami told the INQUIRER.

Six robberies have been reported in the eastern part of Metro Manila in a span of more than three months, all with the same modus operandi: Three men on board a motorcycle preying on bank customers who had just withdrawn a lot of money.

In three of these cases, the victims had come from banks in Pasig City, Uyami said.

In response to the situation, the Pasig police organized a dialogue the other day with the owners and managers of banks in the city to brief them about the situation.

However, only 13 of the 80 banks in the area sent representatives, Uyami said.

Police also found out that some

COPS/ A22

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Drag racing issue draws out anti, pro groups in Parañaque

By Julie M. Aurelio

SAYING THAT DRAG RACING IS a legal and organized sport, the organizer of a drag race held in Parañaque City last Feb. 17 yesterday defended the city mayor's decision to approve the holding of the event which reportedly irked the top official of the Philippine National Police Traffic Management Group (TMG).

Orlando Jarlego, president of the Philippine Drag Racing Familysport, said it took months before Mayor Florencio Bernabe gave his group a permit for Saturday's drag race held on Diosdado Macapagal Blvd. last Saturday.

Jarlego was reacting to news reports that quoted TMG director Chief Supt. Errol Pan as saying that Bernabe should not have issued a permit because the law bans drag racing on public highways.

Jarlego said he was not aware that there was such a law.

The PDRF initially wanted to hold the competition last year but decided to postpone it after it failed to get the mayor's approval, he added.

Bernabe later issued a permit which allowed the PDRF to hold drag races on Feb. 17 and March 17, provided that they coordinate with the City Traffic Management Office.

Good deed

"Mayor Bernabe did a good deed for everybody with the permit he granted because illegal street racers would then flock to our legal and organized event," Jarlego said in a phone interview.

In a statement sent to Pan, PDRF executive officer Priscila R. Arias said Bernabe issued them a permit after several months of negotiations.

Jarlego pointed out that while drag racing is a legal and organized sport, street racing is patronized by small-time racers.

Professional drag racing also requires the implementation of proper safety and security measures for spectators and drivers alike, the drag racing aficionado added.

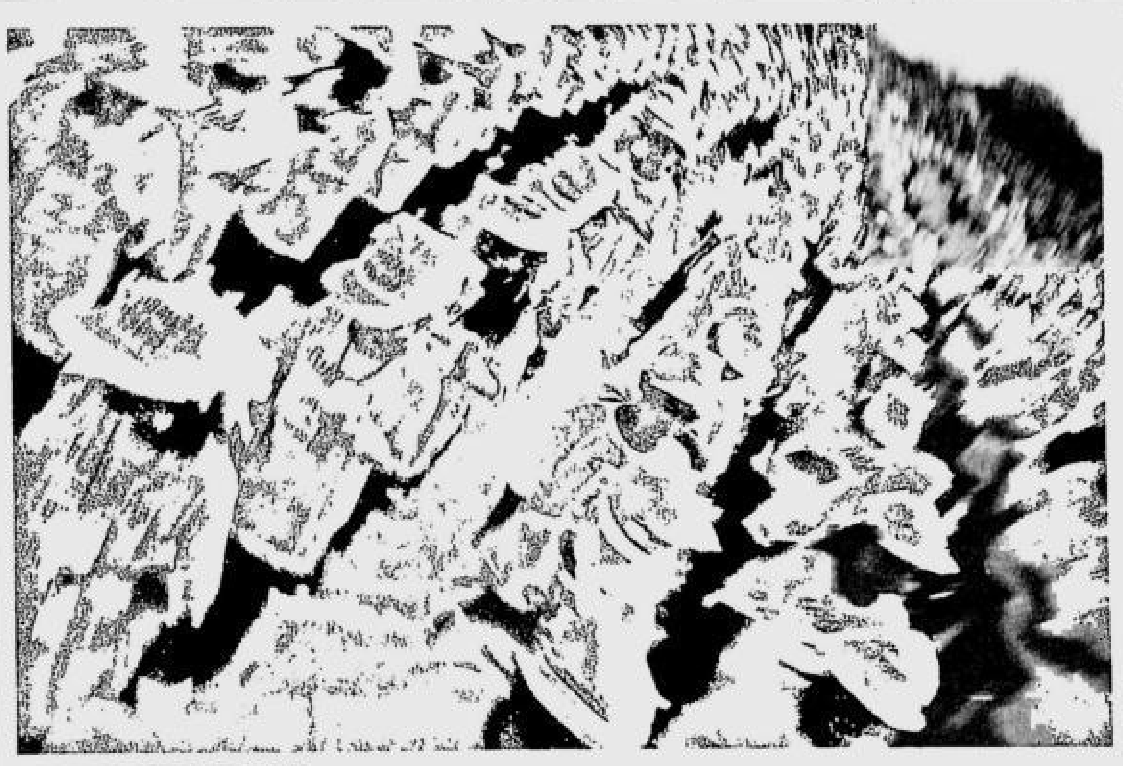
Among PDRF's projects is a national drive dubbed, "Race the Strip, Not the Streets," which aims to campaign against illegal street racing.

Multiple permits

Jarlego also refuted reports that his group did not coordinate with local authorities for the event. He said the PDRF obtained permits from the Parañaque City government, the Philippine Reclamation Authority and the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority. They also coordinated with TMG, he added.

According to Jarlego, he spoke to Bernabe the other day and apologized to the mayor for the furor over the drag race.

He also downplayed rumors that some of their racers were apprehended by the TMG during Saturday's race. The INQUIRER tried to get Bernabe's side, but his spokesperson Nelson Lacambra said the mayor wanted to consult his lawyer before issuing a statement.



READY, SET, BRUSH!
Elementary school students simultaneously brush their teeth in Rizal Park yesterday in an attempt to break the world record for the most number of people brushing their teeth simultaneously. REM ZAMORA

'Silent' running priest Fr. Robert takes a break

FR. ROBERT Reyes was uncharacteristically quiet yesterday, refusing to give interviews and preferring to spend Ash Wednesday in silent prayer at the People Power Monument on Edsa. JOAN BONDOC

By Margaux C. Ortiz

RUNNING PRIEST FR. ROBERT REYES marked Ash Wednesday yesterday in a solemn and quiet fashion.

The usually outspoken Reyes, who was in the country for a short break, turned down requests for interviews as he fasted and prayed at the People Power Monument on Edsa, Quezon City.

Barefoot and clad in jogging pants and a T-shirt, Reyes sat cross-legged under a makeshift tent in front of the monument, refusing to eat anything after his group's activity began at noon.

"Father Robert is avoiding both food and talking as his way of fasting on this holy day," Gloria Alcuaz, member of Kubol Pag-Asa, said in an interview with the INQUIRER.

"Many people have been complaining that he is too outspoken for his own good so he chose to refrain from speaking with anyone, except God," she added.

Two women were seated with Reyes who would wait for the sound coming from a nearby gong before resting or resuming his prayers.

The women, according to Alcuaz, lost their husbands in incidents of extra-judicial killings.

"Father Robert is back in the country for a short break from his missionary work in China," Alcuaz said, adding that the activist priest was also celebrating his 25th anniversary as a priest.

"It is sad that his being a priest is not being appreciated here because people criticize how (Reyes) could not separate the Church from the State," Alcuaz lamented.

Alcuaz said that their group Kubol Pag-Asa (Tent of Hope) has been calling for the replacement of traditional politics with the politics of virtue since 2005.

"With the coming May elections, the people should discern and decide who they think is most worthy to lead them," Alcuaz stressed.

Kubol Pag-Asa member Renecio Espiritu Jr. said the group heeded the call of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) for character change last year.

"There is no better time to think of character change than at the start of the season of Lent," Espiritu said.

Cops, bank execs . . .

From page A21

banks had not installed closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras to monitor and record activities inside their establishments, he added.

CCTVs should also be installed in the parking lot and areas immediately outside the bank, the police official said.

According to Uyami, bank officials should also conduct a background investigation of their employees.

In all of the cases in the eastern part of Metro Manila, the robbers apparently knew which customers had withdrawn big amounts of cash, leading some investigators to theorize that they had been tipped off by people privy to bank transactions.

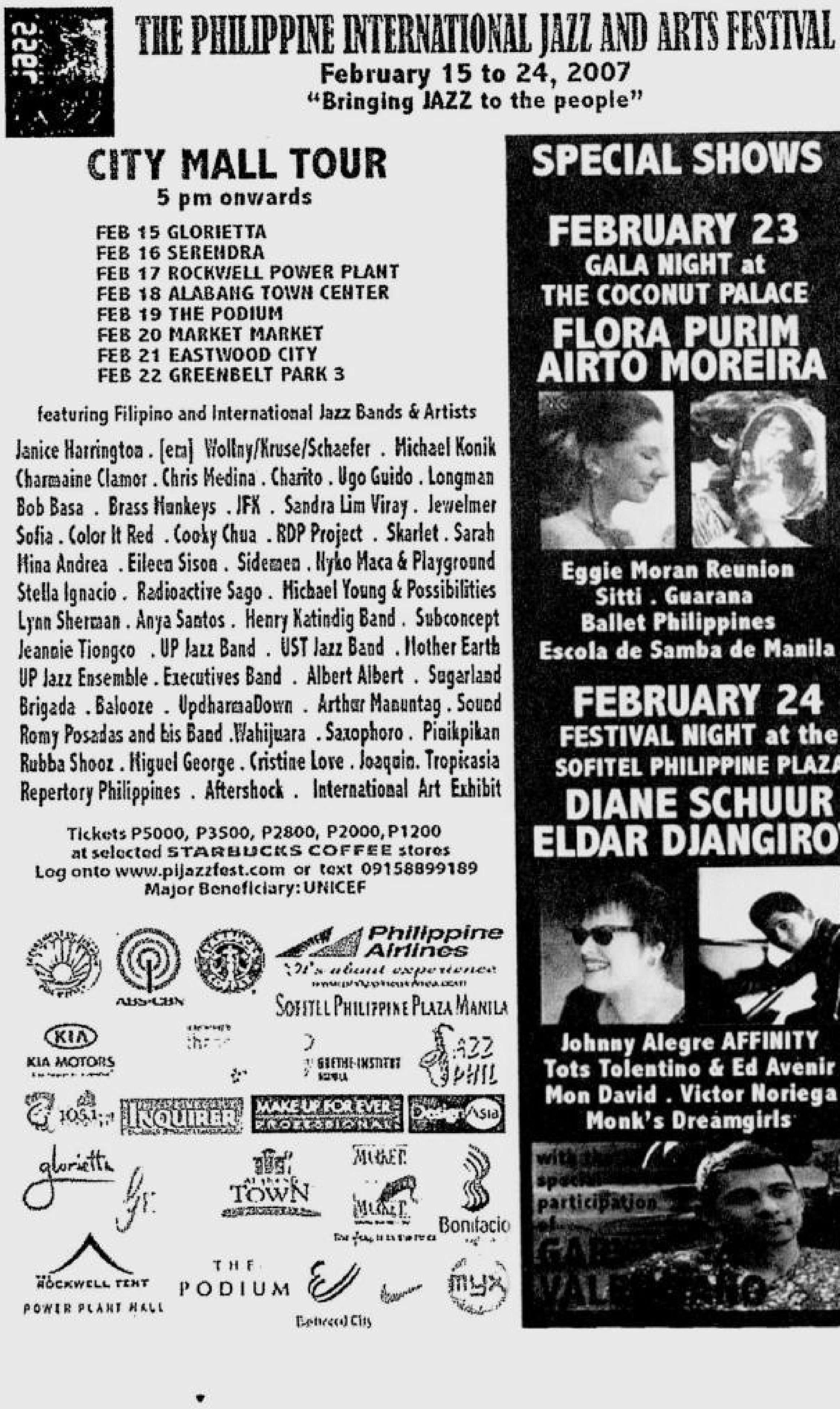
Banks usually ask their customers to turn off their cell phones once inside, apparently to prevent anyone from sending text messages to people outside. "But what about their employees and their guards? They also have cell phones," Uyami said.

The Eastern Police District, which has jurisdiction over the cities of Pasig, Mandaluyong, Marikina and San Juan town, is investigating the six cases, looking for clues amid speculations that only one group could be behind the series of incidents.

In a report given to the INQUIRER, investigators said three groups known for carrying out highway robberies in Quezon City and other parts of Metro Manila could have already merged into a single group.

Last week, three motorcycle-riding men struck in Marikina City and took P400,000 from three employees of a construction company who had just come from a Metrobank branch.

Earlier, three men on a motorcycle also escaped with P2.8 million from ARRHA Export Business employees who had just withdrawn money from a bank.



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Ramon Tulfo

SHE WANTS TO HAVE HER CAKE AND EAT it, too.

President Macapagal-Arroyo is supporting two rivals for the Pampanga gubernatorial race when she should take sides since it's her home province.

Board Member Lilia "Baby" Pineda, a close friend of the President and her townmate (Lubao), is running against the incumbent, Gov. Mark Lapid. The President apparently doesn't want to displease either, so she's not taking sides.

That's very characteristic of Ms Arroyo. Her weakness is to fence-sit in a quarrel between mutual friends or relatives.

Anyway, if friendship plus gratitude is to be the basis for throwing her support for either Pineda or Lapid, the weighing scale tips in favor of Baby Pineda.

Pineda was by GMA's side all throughout the 2004 presidential election campaign, becoming a virtual gofer. She reportedly spent her own money accompanying Ms Arroyo on the campaign trail.

"I love the President, *Pareng* Mon, because she's my friend and *kababayan*," Pineda once told me, with pride in her eyes.

She never campaigned for herself as a candidate for the Pampanga provincial board during the 2004 elections, but she won. She didn't want to leave Ms Arroyo's side on the campaign trail.

Now, Baby Pineda will have to fight the biggest fight of her political career without Ms Arroyo by her side.

Her close friend and *kababayan* appears to have forsaken her. Such is politics.

* * *

Somebody should take a look at how the members of the board of trustees and management of the Air Materiel Wing Savings and Loans Association (AMWSLAI) are running the money firm.

Even before the Supreme Court has yet to decide the controversy involving the 2005 election of members of the board of trustees, the AMWSLAI board and management have allegedly granted huge dividends to its members.

According to inside sources, AMWSLAI should have obtained the approval of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) and its policy-making body, the Monetary Board.

My sources said AMWSLAI was not in a position to grant huge dividends to its officers.

One AMWSLAI director allegedly took advantage of his position when the firm granted millions of pesos in loans to his relative.

* * *

Philippine Ambassador to Israel Antonio Modena, a very energetic and dynamic diplomat, died recently of lung cancer.

I have fond memories of Tony, who was my fellow reporter at the defunct Times Journal from 1975-78. Even then, Modena was already full of energy. Rey Naval, Times Journal managing editor, once teasingly compared him to a "headless chicken" untiringly running around the block.

METROBRIEFS

Man kills mother, son

A 59-YEAR-OLD woman and her 5-year-old grandson were stabbed to death inside their house in Pasig City yesterday afternoon. Their alleged killer: Her 32-year-old son, the boy's father. Pasig City police chief, Senior Supt. Francisco Uyami, told the INQUIRER that the tragedy was discovered when the woman's housemaid ran out of the house and asked for help. Neighbors and policemen entered the house on Banaag Street, Barangay Pineda and saw the bodies of Lydia Ilagan and her grandson, Ace York Ilagan. Silvestre Ilagan, the suspect, was seated quietly in a corner, Uyami added. He said that the suspect was suffering from mental illness, allegedly because of drug use. Police also seized the knife the suspect used in killing his own mother and son.

Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

Benefit concert set

THE NEO-CAFA Singers will be presented by the Friends of the UP College of Fine Arts (Class '66 and '67) in a reunion concert titled, "In Retro Harmony," on Feb. 24, 7 p.m., at the Mandarin Captain's Bar. Project chair, Lenore Lim, a UPCFA alumna (Class '66) and a well-known NY-based printmaker, is spearheading the fund-raising activity to support the UP College of Fine Arts building renewal program as the UPCFA marks its centennial milestone in 2008. For tickets and inquiries, please call Elvie or Elma at 9818500 loc. 3977, or text 0919-4623842.

Legal battle keeps Anna Nicole Smith in morgue

MIAMI—TWELVE DAYS AFTER former Playboy model Anna Nicole Smith died, a legal face-off between her estranged mother and her boyfriend blocked burial of the billionaire's widow who is at the center of a media frenzy in death as in life.

The battle over custody of the lifeless body was further complicated by legal wrangling over paternity of the buxom blonde's 5-month-old baby daughter.

A judge in Florida on Tuesday told the parties to swiftly work out an agreement for a viewing of the body, as they continue their arguments over who should bury her and where.

"The new evidence is that the body is deteriorating at a rapid pace," Judge Larry Seidlin said at a hearing attended by Smith's mother Virgie Arthur, as well as her longtime companion Howard K. Stern and former boyfriend Larry Birkhead, who both claim to have fathered the baby girl.

Arthur wants Smith to be buried in her native Texas while Stern claims the controversial celebrity had expressed the wish to be buried in the Bahamas alongside her 20-year-old son who died there in September.

The judge expressed hope the burial issue would soon be settled. "We want to start to wrap it up," he said.

He also cast doubts over the validity of a 2001 will produced last week, which names Stern as the executor of Smith's estate.

He said the document had "plenty of holes," taking particular exception to one clause that states: "I have intentionally omitted to provide for my spouse and other heirs, including future spouses and children ... " "No way in America would a woman sign a clause like that," Seidlin said.

Stern, meanwhile, told the court he had planned to get married to Smith this week, and that the two had held a "commitment" ceremony at sea last year.

Arthur, for her part, said her relationship with her daughter turned sour years ago, when Smith started taking drugs.

"She was on valium, she liked downers," Arthur said.

Smith died in still unexplained circumstances at a hotel in south Florida on Feb. 8, at the age of 39.

Once a Playboy centerfold and later a TV reality show star, Smith has been under the media spotlight since she married a wheelchair-bound, 89-year-old oil billionaire when she was 26, and fought for his estate after his 1994 death in a case that is yet to be resolved. *AFP*

SPEARS AFP

Britney Spears enters rehab

LOS ANGELES—POP PRINCESS Britney Spears checked into a rehabilitation center for an undisclosed condition Tuesday, triggering a fresh media frenzy just days after her bizarre head-shaving antics.

Paparazzi reportedly scrambled helicopters in an effort to snatch aerial pictures of the exclusive Malibu treatment center where Spears is believed to have voluntarily checked in.

A statement released to People magazine by Spears's representative confirmed the singer had entered rehab. Her do-it-yourself head-shaving Friday has sparked intense speculation about her mental state.

"Britney Spears has voluntarily checked herself into an undisclosed rehab facility today," the statement from Spears' representative said.

"We ask that the media respect her privacy as well as those of her family and friends at this time," it added.

Spears's management could not be immediately contacted for comment but celebrities routinely use People magazine as a conduit for significant announcements.

Spears, famous for hits such as "Oops! I Did It Again" and "Toxic," had briefly entered a rehab center in Antigua last week but checked out within 24 hours, according to reports.

The singer has never been far from the media spotlight ever since she announced plans to divorce husband Kevin Federline, the father of her two children, last November.

Entertainment media have followed her every misstep since then, with unflattering photographs of a panty-less Spears appearing regularly. *AFP*

MUD MEN

Member of the so-called Block of the Mud walk during a Carnival parade in Parati, Brazil, Feb. 17. Brazil's extravagant Carnival festivities closed with a climactic free-for-all on the streets as people savored the last moments of abandon before Ash Wednesday, when the nation of 180 million returns to work. AP

Pakistan group blamed for India train blasts

NEW DELHI—INDIAN DETECTIVES believe they have evidence linking this week's deadly bombings on a cross-border train to a Pakistan-based Muslim militant group, a report said Wednesday.

"Investigators ... have picked up a vital terror trace—a phone call made to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir from Delhi after Sunday night's attack," The Times of India said.

"The recorded conversation reveals links to a Pakistan-based terrorist group," the daily said.

The evidence turned "the needle of suspicion more firmly towards" the main Islamic group fighting Indian rule in Kashmir, Lashkar-e-Taiba, it said.

The firebombing left 68 passengers dead and a dozen more badly burned aboard the "Friendship Express" which was traveling from the Indian capital to Pakistan's Lahore.

India blamed the same guerrilla group for an attack on its parliament in December 2001, which almost pushed the two South Asian neighbors to war.

India and Pakistan have fought two of their three wars since independence over Kashmir which they control in part but claim in full.

"So confident are sleuths about the quality of evidence that they intend to present it to Pakistani officials at the first meeting of the joint terror mechanism scheduled for March 6," the newspaper said.

Pakistan Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri was due to open scheduled bilateral talks later Wednesday with his Indian counterpart Pranab Mukherjee, despite the bombing.

Their meeting under the India-Pakistan Joint Commission will be followed by the first session of the antiterror panel or mechanism set up last year after 186 people died in train bombings in Mumbai, India's financial capital.

The antiterror panel is to meet in Islamabad on March 6-7.

Police accused Pakistan's spy agency of orchestrating the Mumbai attacks which were carried out by an Islamic militant group.

Pakistan denied the charge but India delayed the peace process, relaunched between the two nations in January 2004, for several months over the attacks. *AFP*

North Africa feared as staging ground for terror

TUNIS—THE PLAN, HATCHED for months in the arid mountains of North Africa, was to attack the US and British embassies here. It ended in a series of gunbattles in January that killed a dozen militants and two Tunisian security officers.

But the most disturbing aspect of the violence in this placid, tourist-friendly nation is that it came from across the border in Algeria, where an Islamic terrorist organization has vowed to unite radical Islamic groups across North Africa.

Counterterrorism officials on three continents say the trouble in Tunisia is the latest evidence yet that a brutal Algerian group with a long history of violence is acting on its promise: to organize extremists across North Africa and join the remnants of al-Qaida into a new international force for jihad.

Last week, the group claimed responsibility for seven nearly simultaneous bombings that destroyed police stations in towns east of Algiers, the Algerian capital, killing six people.

Officials say the violent Algerian group is the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, known by its French initials GSPC, and it is funneling North African fighters to Iraq, but is also turning militants back toward their home countries.

While most estimates put the current membership of the group in the hundreds, it has survived more than a decade of Algerian government attempts to eradicate it.

Intelligence suggests that the network has associates in France, Italy, Turkey and even Greece, a favored entry point to Europe because of its relatively lax immigration controls, counterterrorism officials say.

In September, al-Qaida's second in command, Ayman al-Zawahiri, said that his global terrorist network had joined forces with the GSPC.

But the strongest evidence yet of the GSPC's North African cross-border cooperation came in January when Tunisia announced that it had killed 12 Islamic extremists and captured 15. Officials said that six of the extremists had crossed into the country from neighboring Algeria. *New York Times News Service*

Global vote to pick "new" 7 Wonders of the World

ZURICH—WHAT ARE THE greatest architectural achievements in history? Rome's Colosseum? The Great Wall of China? The Pyramids of Giza?

That's what millions of people are asking themselves as they vote in the largest global poll ever conducted, an attempt to recast ancient history by ranking the top architectural marvels as the "new" seven wonders of the world.

Besides the vast scale of the poll—itself a wonder—the new list may reveal what the wired voters in today's global village view differently from the ancient Greeks, who laid out the original seven wonders more than two thousand years ago.

About 200,000 people are voting online or firing off mobile phone text messages every day, organizers estimate—and the final total of ballots cast before the result is announced on July 7 could top 100 million.

"This is the first ever global vote. It's never been done before. Culture is one of the few things that would be relevant to a global vote," said Tia Viering, spokesperson for the Zurich-based New 7 Wonders campaign.

"It is going up quickly and we expect it to go up even more quickly. The faster it goes, the more people find out about it," Viering said.

She said Europe was lagging in the voting, but there was lots of interest in the United States, China, India and Latin America.

The first list of the most impressive monuments of the ancient world was compiled by the Greeks and included sites around the Mediterranean such as the Lighthouse of Alexandria and the Hanging Gardens of Babylon.

The only wonder to have survived to the present day is the Pyramids of Giza, and that inspired Swiss-Canadian adventurer Bernard Weber, who decided the start of a new millennium was the right moment to find a consensus "on the last 2,000 years of human achievement."

The number of votes probably make it the largest poll ever undertaken on a global basis, said pollster John Zogby, but that did not make it a scientific exercise.

"At the very least the pollster has to create some kind of sample. However that doesn't reduce the fact that this is an interesting and intriguing project," said Zogby, who runs polling organization Zogby International.

"It's an awful lot of people, I can't recall anything of this size." A genuine sample poll would have to take a representative cross-section of society by age, culture, sex and other demographics, while the Seven Wonders vote is open to anyone with an interest.

There is no mechanism to prevent people voting more than once, provided they have the desire to do so by setting up more than one Internet or mobile phone profile.

Each has to pick exactly seven sites, which Viering said should help prevent too much skewing in favor of local sites.

"All of that will cause the purists in my profession to pooh-pooh this, but it's too damn interesting to be pure," Zogby said.

The vote is, however, still unlikely to reach the totals of national elections in large democracies such as the United States, where 122 million people voted in 2004, India or Brazil.

The other four leading candidates for the new list are the Incan mountaintop city Machu Picchu in Peru, the rose-red desert city of Petra in Jordan, Easter Island's mysterious statues and India's Taj Mahal.

Further down the 21-entry shortlist—which in turn was whittled down from 77 by a panel of architectural experts—are the Eiffel Tower in Paris, the statue of Christ the Redeemer in Rio de Janeiro, the Statue of Liberty in New York, Britain's Stonehenge and Moscow's Kremlin.

Weber and his team are travelling through the Americas on a tour of the shortlisted sites there, building up to the final announcement in July. *Reuters*

WORLDBRIEFS

15 kids drown in India

KOCHI, INDIA—Fifteen school children and three teachers drowned when their overcrowded row-boat capsized on a reservoir in a southern Indian bird sanctuary, police said Wednesday. The children were all aged 11 or under. First reports Tuesday night said at least 18 children had died. Deputy inspector general of police Ravatha Chandrasekhar said 106 children, 10 teachers and two non-teaching staff boarded three boats Tuesday evening at Thattekade park, 55 km east of the port city of Kochi, formerly Cochin. "Ninety six persons survived the tragedy. Rescue operations are continuing with the help of navy divers," Chandrashekhar said. *AFP*

Turkey building collapses

ISTANBUL—Two women were killed and 28 other people injured when a five-storey building collapsed Wednesday in a popular Istanbul neighborhood, officials said. Istanbul Governor Muammer Guler told the semi-official Anatolia news agency that one of the injured, a 7-year-old girl, was in critical condition. The search for survivors—suspended when inhabitants of the building said all 30 residents were accounted for—resumed after a two and a half hour break when rescue workers said they picked up signals from under the rubble, the NTV news channel reported. *AFP*

Car bomb kills 13 in Iraq

NAJAF—A suicide car bomber attacked an Iraqi police checkpoint in the Shiite holy city of Najaf on Wednesday, killing at least 13 people and wounding dozens more, police said. Najaf's governor, Assaad Abu Gilel, said the dead were seven police, three women and three children. The attack targeted a police checkpoint in Maydan Square near Najaf's old city, which holds the mausoleum of Imam Ali, the holiest site in Shiite Islam, and the offices of several leading clerics. "This was a terrorist operation. The police checkpoint prevented the car from entering the old city, so the terrorist blew himself on the spot," the governor said. *AFP*

Thaksin aide quits

BANGKOK—A one-time key aide to deposed Thai premier Thaksin Shinawatra on Wednesday quit his post at the head of the military government's new economics team, less than a week after he was appointed. Somkid Jatusripitak was deputy prime minister when Thaksin fell from power, but the army-installed government had tapped him six days ago to head a new team charged with boosting sagging confidence in Thailand's economy. The appointment of Somkid, also a former finance minister, sparked an uproar among supporters of the coup and had drawn threats of street protests. *AFP*

Somalia mortar blasts

MOGADISHU—A wave of pre-dawn mortar attacks pounded Mogadishu and killed at least 16 people on Tuesday in one of the most brutal bombardments since an Islamist movement was forced out of the Somali capital last month. *Reuters*

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Likewise, on February 26, 2007(Monday), GSIS will replace its Salary Loans program with the new GSIS Consolidated Loan (ConsoLoan) Program, which offers members higher loan proceeds and longer repayment terms. The Consoloan can be applied through the GW@PS kiosks or over-the-counter filing in servicing GSIS offices. GW@PS kiosks are installed in all GSIS offices nationwide and in selected island provinces.

To enable their employees to avail of the ConsoLoan, government agencies are advised to comply with the following:

- Submit names of the Agency Authorized Officers (AAOs) to the GSIS servicing office
- Require their AAOs to train with GSIS on the electronic certification system
- Require their AAOs to apply for their eCard Plus with the GSIS
- Allow GSIS to install the Radio Frequency ID (RFID) readers or modems in a dedicated personal computer with the required specifications

For further information and/or clarification on the electronic certification system and Consoloan, please get in touch or communicate with your servicing GSIS office.

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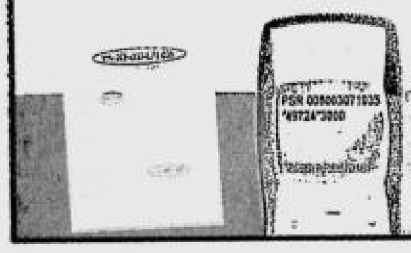
Halimbawa:
kung P2550 ang halaga, makakakuha ka ng 26 raffle numbers (2550 ÷ 100 = 26), at kakaltasan ka ng P39.00 (26 x P1.50) Isang beses lang pwedeng i-enter ang bawat resibo sa bawat draw. Importanteng itago ang resibo, dahil kung manalo ka, kailangan ipakita ito bilang pampatunay.

Finance Secretary Gary Teves and BIR Commissioner Jose Mario Bunag awards the P1 Million check to **Ms. Michelle Magallanes**, housewife from **Marikina City**.



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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Cheney: US to leave Iraq 'with honor'

TOKYO—US VICE PRESIDENT DICK CHENEY SAID ON WEDNESday the United States wants to finish its mission in Iraq and "return with honor," despite the war's growing unpopularity at home and doubts among US allies.

CHENEY AP

Cheney's visit to Tokyo comes just weeks after Japan's defense minister said starting the Iraq war was a mistake and its foreign minister called the US occupation strategy "immature."

The remarks forced Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, whom Cheney meets later on Wednesday, to scurry to reassure Washington that Tokyo's backing for US policy in Iraq was unchanged.

But a survey released on Tuesday showed most Japanese voters agreed with Defense Minister Fumio Kyuma when he said US President George W. Bush was wrong to start the war.

"We know that terrorist attacks are not caused by the use of strength, they are invited by the perception of weakness," Cheney said in a speech aboard the USS Kitty Hawk aircraft carrier at Yokosuka Navy Base near Tokyo.

"We know that if we leave Iraq before the mission is completed, the enemy is going to come after us. And I want you to know that the American people will not support a policy of retreat," he added, as US military personnel applauded.

"We want to complete the mission, we want to get it done right, and we want to return with honor," said Cheney, who heads on Thursday for Australia to meet Prime Minister John Howard, another staunch supporter of Bush's Iraq policy.

Bush is sending 21,500 more troops to Iraq, but Democrats in charge of US Congress are pressing for a change in strategy.

British media reported that Prime Minister Tony Blair was set to announce on Wednesday that Britain would start to withdraw its 7,100 troops from Iraq within weeks. *(See related story on Page A1)*

Blair was expected to say the withdrawal reflected Britain's success in southern Iraq, where control of security is being handed back to Iraqi forces, the media reports said.

In talks earlier with Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuhisa Shiozaki, Cheney thanked Japan for the roughly 550 non-combat troops it sent to southern Iraq in 2004 as part of Tokyo's largest and riskiest overseas mission since World War Two.

The soldiers returned home last July, but about 200 Japanese air force personnel based in Kuwait are still transporting supplies to the US-led coalition in Iraq.

Cheney also sought to allay any fears that Washington's commitment to Japan and the Asia-Pacific would falter.

"The president asked me to make this journey, first to Japan, then to Guam, and then to Australia ... to reaffirm America's deep commitment to a forward presence in the Asia-Pacific region," he said in his speech.

The United States has about 50,000 troops based in Japan, about half its total military presence in the region.

The two allies agreed last year to reorganize those forces, including shifting 8,000 Marines from Japan's southern island of Okinawa to the US Pacific territory of Guam by 2014.

Cheney and Shiozaki agreed in their talks that a multilateral energy-for-arms forged in Beijing last week was a step in the right direction, a Japanese statement said. *Reuters*

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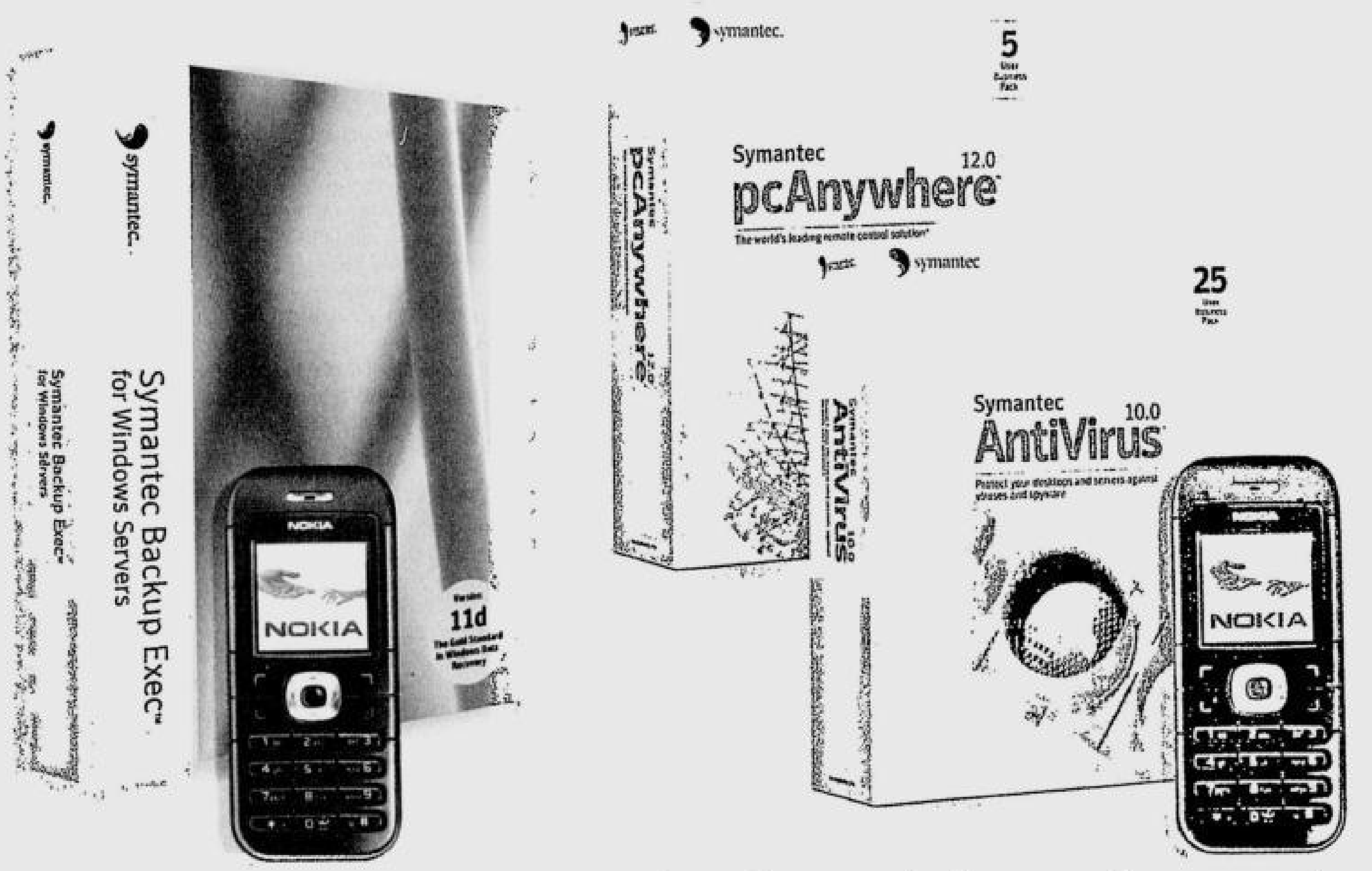

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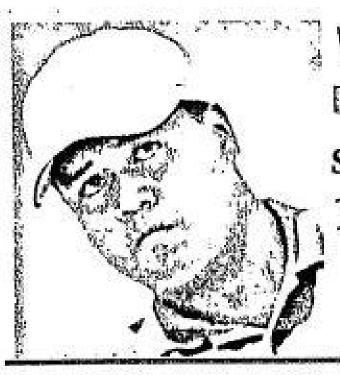

WHAT'S INSIDE

Canlubang sizzles with 11-point lead /A26

SPORTS

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Oscar, Floyd start fight promo tour /A27

Fiba lifts ban on RP five at last

SBP shifts focus to Seaba squad

By June Navarro and Marc Anthony Reyes

PHILIPPINE BASKETBALL IS OUT OF THE QUAGMIRE.

The International Basketball Federation (Fiba) yesterday officially lifted the suspension on the country after the BAP-Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas completed the requirements set by the sport's governing body.

BAP-SBP president Manny V. Pangilinan confirmed this development during a press conference last night after receiving a letter from Fiba secretary general Patrick Baumann that the suspension had been formally lifted.

"It is (therefore) my pleasure to confirm to you that the Tokyo agreement has now been complied with and, as a consequence, the suspension of the Philippines is lifted," said Baumann in his letter.

Though the development was a foregone conclusion following the basketball Unity Congress on Feb. 5, the news was still welcomed with absolute joy as it formally puts the country back in the international basketball scene.

But for Pangilinan, getting Philippine basketball back on track is only the beginning.

"The lifting of the suspension is easier compared to the difficult tasks ahead," said Pangilinan. "There are

FIBA/ A26

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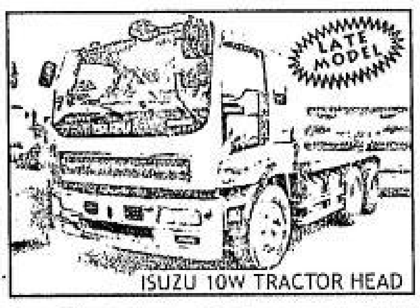
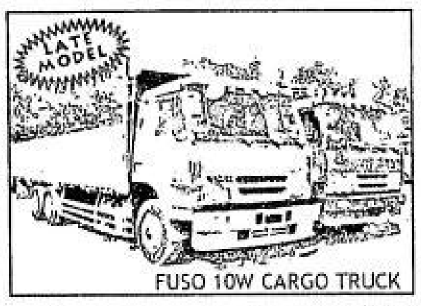
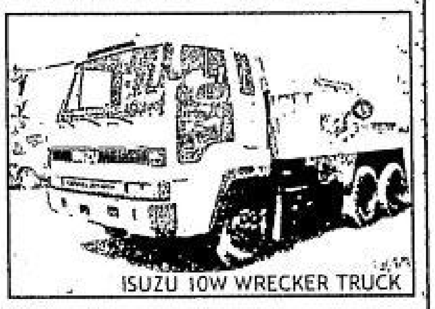


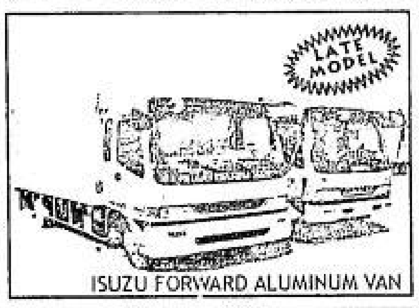
LATE MODEL
ISUZU 10W TRACTOR HEAD



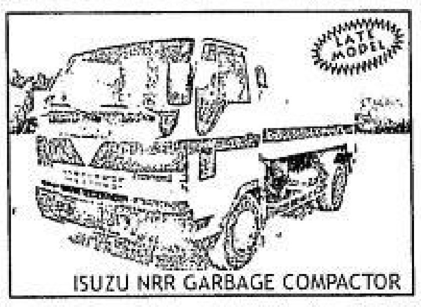
LATE MODEL
FUSO 10W CARGO TRUCK



ISUZU 10W WRECKER TRUCK



LATE MODEL
ISUZU FORWARD ALUMINUM VAN



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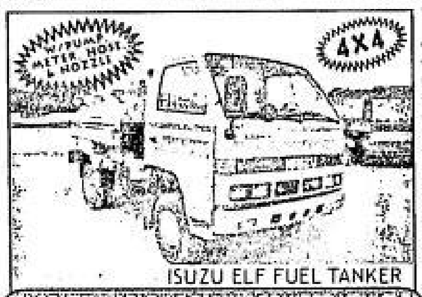

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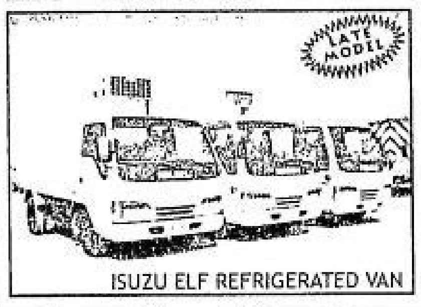

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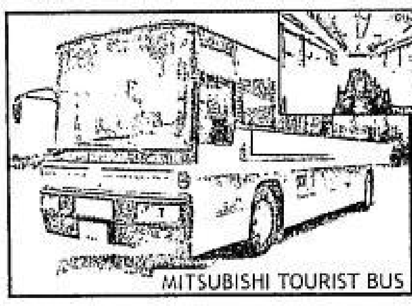

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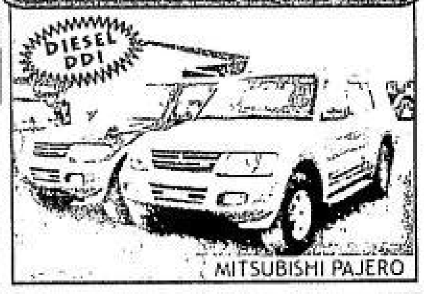

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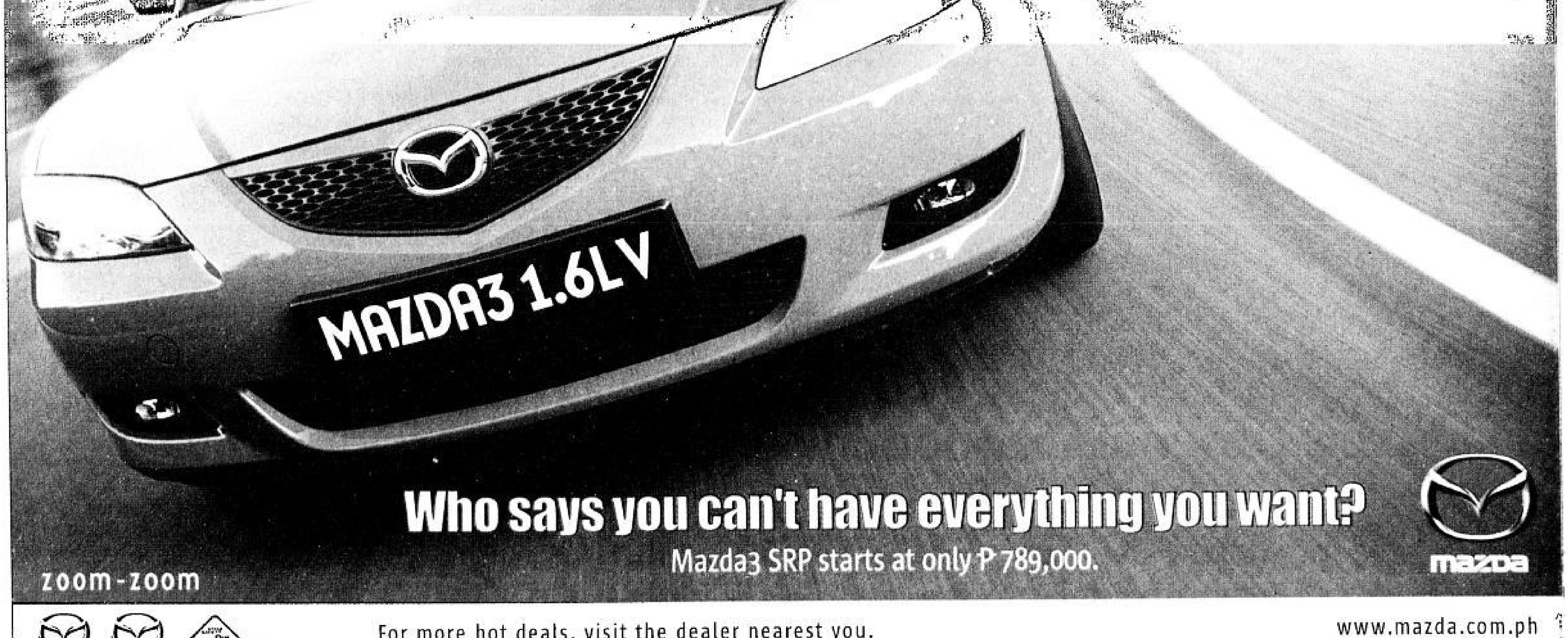
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Fiba lifts ban on RP basketball team at last

From page A25

a lot of things that need to be done and this (Fiba recognition) is just the beginning."

With the development, focus has now shifted to the formation of the national team for the Southeast Asian Basketball Association championships, the qualifying tournament for the Fiba-Asia championships in July.

The Philippine Basketball Association has insisted that an all-professional team be fielded in the Seaba tournament set May 24-28 in Bangkok.

It runs contrary to the decision of the five-man selection committee, which decided to tap a mixture of amateurs and professionals for the Bangkok joust.

Citing a provision in the BAP-SBP charter, PBA commissioner Noli Eala said the pro league would take the lead on the formation of the team since the Seaba is a qualifying event leading to the Olympics.

The PBA invoked its right and sent a letter to the BAP-SBP board for the approval of an all-professional team in the Seaba.

"We have sent the recommendation to Mr. Pangilinan and we are confident the SBP will agree to the PBA's position," said Eala.

But despite the differences, Pangilinan expects that a compromise could be worked out for the good of the sport.

"There should be a fair and equitable manner of distributing the burden of the team," he said. "I hope we will see a way through this for the sake of the national interest."

BAP-SBP vice chair Ricky Vargas, special adviser to the board Sen. Jinggoy Estrada and Junjun Capistrano, a member of the board of trustees, were also present during the press conference.

"Now, we can start our work in earnest," said Pangilinan.

Article 13, Section 1 of the BAP-SBP constitution states that the professional sector will form, prepare and enter the national team to elite international competitions such as the Olympics, world championships, Fiba championships and the Asian Games, including the qualifying tournaments for such competitions.

"This was the basis of the PBA board when it decided to send an all-professional team to the Seaba, which is a vital part in our preparation for the Fiba-Asia and, hopefully, the Olympics," said Eala.

Meanwhile, the country's top two sports bodies welcomed the good news from basketball in different ways.

The Philippine Olympic Committee lauded the "gallant stand" of basketball stakeholders throughout the two-year battle.

The Philippine Sports Commission, on the other hand, is gifting the BAP-SBP with a spanking new office at the PhilSports Complex in Pasig City.

"We welcome this development," PSC chair William "Butch" Ramirez told the INQUIRER.

Quickly, Ramirez ordered an office space prepared for the new cage body, finally discarding the old BAP office at the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex, which has been a witness to the old association's troubled past.

PAL INTERCLUB

Canlubang sizzles with 11-point lead

By Ernesto A. Gonzales

CAGAYAN DE ORO—DEFENDING CHAMPION CANLUBANG TRANSLATED ITS ACKNOWLedged strength on paper into an impressive five-under-par team effort on the Del Monte course yesterday to open an ominous 11-point lead after the first round of the 60th Philippine Airlines Interclub golf tournament here.

Gunning for a 14th title and a second straight division championship double, the most successful team in Interclub history finished with an impressive 149 points as Mark Fernando shot a three-under-par 69, national caddies champion Jonel Ababa fired a 70 and Rufino Bayron and rookie Paul Echavez matched par 72.

The 26-year-old Fernando, a tournament sophomore who grabbed the limelight by scoring a hole-in-one in the Konica-Minolta National Pro-Am at Riviera early this month, amassed 39 points under the PAL scoring system. Ababa was good for 38 and Bayron and Echavez contributed 36 each.

To underscore its depth, Canlubang, winner by only six points over Southwoods last year in Davao, found no need for the 33 by Joseph Labajo, which even surpassed the scores of mainstays from the top other teams.

Anthony Fernando, Mark's cousin, completed a big show for Zamboanga-bred players with 38 points and Jong Laput had 37 but Manila Southwoods could muster only 138 as Tonlits Asistio's 33 was nullified after he failed to sign his scorecard.

As a result the 31 of 10-year-old Miggy Yee, the youngest to play in the men's tournament, counted behind the 32 of Miko Alejandro.

Canlubang's sizzling start contrasted with the disappointing takeoff of tournament co-host Del Monte which didn't come close to matching its magical opening round of 156 when it won here in 2004.

Romeo Jaraula, who fired a 67 for 43 points to lead that memorable first-day charge, made only 36 this time.

Ondoy Mondilla scored 35, Belem Arancon added 34 and either one of the 32s of Ben Miñoza and reigning club champion Banny Abanio rounded out the scoring for the team from Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon, which totaled only 137.

"I did not expect Del Monte's start," said Canlubang team captain Luigi Yulo, anticipating a big run from his chief rivals when play shifts to the Pueblo de Oro course. "Perhaps, they are preparing for some big surprise tomorrow.

"We will try to pull away in the second round and if we do that, it's over," added Yulo, who helped Canlubang pull off a second straight championship in the Seniors division here only last Sunday.

Expected to get going for Canlubang today are national amateur champion Jay Bayron, Jun Bernis and veterans Dave Hernandez and Boyet Saragoza.

Asian Gamers Michael Bibat and Gene Bondoc will play for Southwoods to keep Canlubang from storming away for good.

Mark Fernando gunned down six birdies in a 36-33 card while Jonel Ababa birdied the last two holes to cap a 34-36 round. Anthony Fernando, on the other hand, finished strongly with four birdies and an eagle on the back nine while Laput also had an eagle on top of three birdies.

Orchard, with jungolf star Wolen Superal leading the way with 37 points, grabbed the lead in the Founders division at 120 with Wack Wack second at 116 behind the 35 of Sammy Sy.

Valley was the runaway leader in the Sportswriters class with 122 while Maharlika Golf Club of Bay Area surged in front in the Friendship division with 112.

Action Asia, Airbus, Boeing, Bombardier, Callaway Golf, 101.1 Crossover, GE Aviation, GECAS, Mizuno, People Asia and Royal Caribbean are the major sponsors. The corporate supporters are www.inquirer.net., Business Mirror, Fortune Tobacco, GMA-7, Honda Cars Davao, Premier Wine & Spirits and Radio Mindanao Network.

Century Park Hotel, C-Lium Fibre, Foreign Post, Lufthansa Technik, What's On Expat Communications are the minor sponsors.

The first-round results:

CHAMPIONSHIP—Canlubang 149; Manila Southwoods 138, Del Monte 137; Hawaii Fil-Am 112; Riviera 97; Pinoy Vancouver GC 94.

FOUNDERS—Orchard 120; Wack Wack 116; Negros 109; Cebu 109; Pueblo de Oro 108; Sta. Elena 102; Forest Hills 101, Sherwood Hills 92; Rancho Palos Verdes 87.

SPORTSWRITERS—Valley 122; Iloilo 109; Villamor 105; John Hay 100; Mactan 98; Camp Evangelista 97; Iligan, Phil. Navy 95; Alabang, Lanang, Alta Vista 94; Pacay 93; Greenhills, Apo 86; Davao 79; Green Tee 78; Zamboanga 77; San Juanico 66; Lumbia, Team LA 65; Pittsburgh 51; Victorias 49. Riyadh Dirab 48; Brotherhood Sharp 39.

FRIENDSHIP—Maharlika 112, Stanford 90; IAGC/Golfinos of San Diego 90; UP Tee Jots 88; Guinhalaran 85; Fil-Golf of Florida 83; San Francisco Crystal 79; Australasian-Melbourne 78; Mt. Malindang 73; Skywest 63; Cotabato 58; PGA British Columbia 56; Seattle Washington 56; Mabuhay SFO 46; Mountain Shadows 40; FGA Riyadh 36.

Top Canlubang scorer Mark Fernando pitches delicately to the fifth green of the Del Monte course. ERNIE U. SARMIENTO

Red-hot Miñoza top favorite in Razon golf

By Musong R. Castillo

MIÑOZA

STA. ROSA, LAGUNA—Defending champion Juvic Pagunsan and the red-hot Frankie Miñoza, who engaged in an enthralling playoff last year, will be coming into the P4.4 million Don Pocholo Razon Invitational riding contrasting fates.

Pagunsan signed up at the last minute after getting a clean bill of health, hoping to snap a recent string of forgettable performances and become the first repeat winner of this rich event that tees off today.

Miñoza, on the other hand, is having a most memorable February and will come into the 72-hole event at the windswept The Country Club here not only as the sentimental favorite but the logical one as well.

After winning the Philippine Open for the second time at the start of the month, the 47-year-old Miñoza finished in a three-way tie for second in the $1-million Indonesian Open last week.

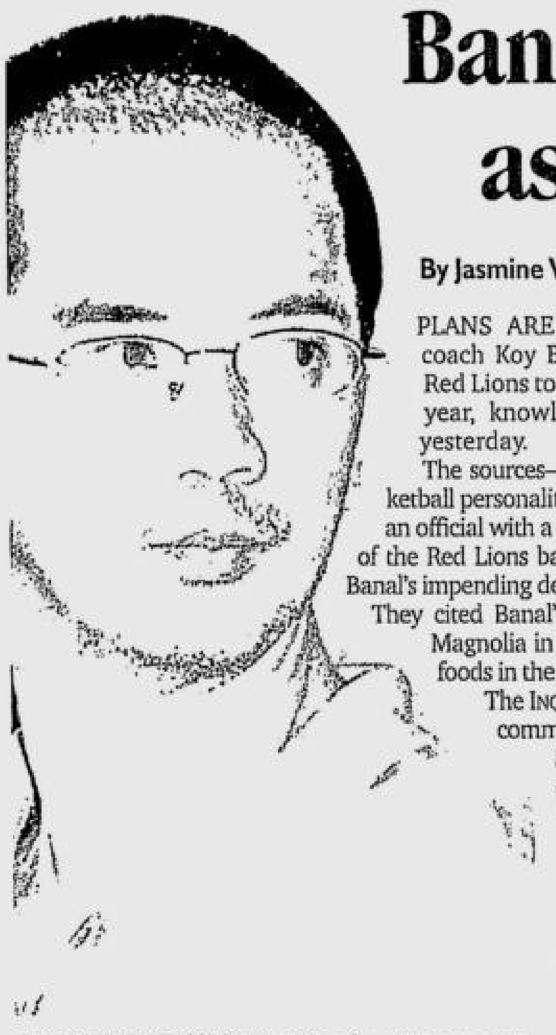
Pagunsan, who missed the cut in both the RP Open and Malaysian Open, is still suffering from a shoulder injury he sustained in the third round of the Qatar Open recently. He made the decision to play out of respect for tournament sponsor and port services magnate Ricky Razon.

Pagunsan skipped the pro-am yesterday and will tee off in the in the 8 a.m. group on No. 10 in the company of Rosales and Cyna Rodriguez, one of the five members of the ladies national pool under the ICTSI golf program.

Miñoza was so in form he fired a 66 in the pro-am yesterday. He tees off at 8:40 a.m. at the backside in a flight that includes Edwin Estrera and Marlon Dizon.

Edwin Sanchez teamed up with amateur Martin Gomez to pool a 60 and rule the pro-am worth P70,000 for the pro. Que and Jose Buenaventura shot a 61 for second spot worth P50,000.

Banal tipped to be replaced as San Beda Lions mentor



ON THE WAY OUT?: Koy Banal AUGUST DE LA CRUZ

By Jasmine W. Payo

PLANS ARE AFOOT TO REPLACE SAN BEDA coach Koy Banal, the tactician who steered the Red Lions to the end of a 28-year title drought last year, knowledgeable sources told the INQUIRER yesterday.

The sources—members of the school alumni, a basketball personality close to some players of San Beda and an official with a direct link to one of the decision-makers of the Red Lions basketball program—told the INQUIRER of Banal's impending departure.

They cited Banal's concurrent tenure as head coach of Magnolia in the PBL and as assistant coach of Purefoods in the PBA as reasons.

The INQUIRER tried but could not reach Banal for comment.

San Beda officials refused to confirm or deny the story, veiling the plans behind vague responses.

"We don't know yet," said San Beda athletic director Ato Badolato.

Two sources told the INQUIRER that a new coach has already been tapped to replace Banal on a "caretaker" basis.

Although no name was mentioned, the source said the incoming mentor was part of a short list of former Red Lions, including Talk 'N Text team manager Frankie Lim, San Beda team manager Mike Advani, Purefoods assistant coach Ronnie Magsanoc and former PBA mentor Eric Altamirano.

Lim and Advani have been seen handling the practices of the Red Lions the past two days while Banal has not been showing up in these sessions since Monday.

"Nothing's final," said Advani when sought for comment.

San Beda is holding a party today and several alumni have said that the school might use the occasion to make the coaching announcement.

Telecommunications tycoon Manny Pangilinan, the school's top patron, and San Beda rector-president Fr. Anscar Chupungco, OSB, have reportedly been requesting Banal to give up his other coaching jobs and focus on the Lions' campaign.

Banal, who also called the shots in Far Eastern University's 2003 UAAP title run, joined the Lions mid-season of 2005 as replacement for Nash Racela.

In last year's Finals, San Beda nipped the Philippine Christian University, 2-1, in a best-of-three series.

Drawing a huge boost from 6-foot-8 Nigerian Sam Ekwe, the Lions dominated the elimination-round and finished with a 13-1 win-loss record. That lone loss came when Banal missed the match to work at the bench of Purefoods, which played a crucial match that same day.

Matteo gets Driver of Year nomination

GUIDICELLI

FOR PROVING HIMSELF AND SEIZING the Karter of the Year title in last season's final race, Matteo Guidicelli has been named as one of the nominees for National Driver of the Year in the 2007 Golden Wheel Awards set Feb. 28 at the Pagcor-Casino Filipino Airport.

Guidicelli, who lost the 2005 karting title to Michelle Bumgarner in a disputed final race, came back bravely last year to finally nail his second overall crown.

The commercial model-son of a Cebuana mother and an Italian businessman received a citation from the Philippine Sportswriters Association (PSA) in January for his impressive victory in the National Karting Series.

His first PSA award came in 2005 after bagging his first karting award.

"It's a great honor to be nominated for the Golden Wheel National Driver of the Year award," said Guidicelli, who is backed by Petron, Alessandra Racing, Penshoppe, Pepsi, Addict Mobile, Swatch, Animax and Rudy Project.

Among his rivals for the award are Glenn Aguilar (motocross), Jolet Jao (road racing), Jody Coseteng (touring car), Tyson Sy (Asian Formula Three) and Marlon Stockinger (Asian karting).

SPORTSWATCH

Lady Maroons take softball finals Game 1

MERRY DE JESUS MADE LEAGUE LEAGUE MVP CLOIENE MUYCO look hapless at the mound, hammering the game-winning home run as University of the Philippines bested Adamson U, 3-2, in Game 1 of their best-of-three UAAP women's softball finals. De Jesus homered with the count at 2-2-2 (balls-strikes-outs) at the bottom seventh inning. The 18-year-old Lady Maroon slammed the back-to-back MVP Muyco's sinker for the winner that pushed UP closer to its sixth league title and its first since 2001. The Lady Maroons go for the title at 10 a.m. Saturday, also at the Rosario Sports Complex diamond.

Arellano U Chiefs nip EAC Generals

ORLANDO DAROYA ERUPTED FOR 36 POINTS WHILE GIO CIRIACRUZ poured in 20 as the Arellano University Chiefs subdued the Emilio Aguinaldo College Generals after two overtimes, 103-99, yesterday in Game 1 of their best-of-three finals in the 14th Petron-NCRAA basketball tournament. Daroya scored on an undergoal stab and a triple to push the Chiefs in front, 99-96, with 2:23 to go in the second extension at the Arellano Legarda gym. La Salle-Dasmariñas beat PUP, 84-63, in their showdown for the women's crown.

105 fights up in Roligon's 5-cocker

THE ANNUAL "LARGAHAN 5-COCK DERBY," ONE OF THE TOP ATTRACtions at Roligon Mega Cockpit with at least 250 confirmed entries, kicks off at 2 p.m. today. A total of 105 fights are on tap in the event presented by Lakpue Drug Inc. and Thunderbird Enertone. All five champions in the recent RMC 17th Anniversary Derby will field entries: Loloy Gallano (Try Me), Willard Po and William Chia (WP Shaolin), Konsi Ford (Tyler), Hernan Dolatre (Jet Star Mori) and lawyer Art de Castro (Hardy Boys). Host Rolly Ligon said the five-cock format stakes a guaranteed prize of P2 million, Entry fee is P4,400.

Special SJC cockfest under way

A SPECIAL TWO-COCK "ULUTAN" WILL BE STAGED AT THE SAN JUAN Coliseum starting at 11 a.m. today with P10,000 going to each of the champions. Registration fee is P1,500. Participants who will emerge as double champion (two entries with two wins each) will get P30,000, according to promoter Butch Nunez. This format will be adopted every Thursday. Meanwhile, the venue's National Rambulan 8-Cock Derby, the much-awaited super cockfest with P10.5 million at stake, received a big boost yesterday with the entry of 30 more participants, bringing to 150 the number of cockers vying in the opening rounds at SJC on Mar. 1, 3 and 6.

Las Pinas 'fastest win' event today

SMALLTIME COCKERS FROM MUNTINLUPA, PARAÑAQUE, LAS PIÑAS, Pasay, Laguna and Cavite collide in 60 matches today in the "Fastest Win One-Cock Ulutan" at the Las Piñas Coliseum. Hosts Antolin and Ely Esguerra of Bacoor, Cavite, said the event's attractive format will ensure exciting fights: the fastest win champion after every five fights will receive P5,000; second placer, P3,000; third, P2,000 and fourth, P1,000. Entry fee is P1,100. Meanwhile, four entries—Jandre Andrew, BS Edwin, RBM Mar. 5 Timbangan Elorde and Mike and Baldo—topped the venue's 3-cock derby last Saturday.

THE ANTICS of Floyd Mayweather Jr. (right) fail to amuse the stoic Oscar De La Hoya during the press conference. AFP

Boys will be boys as Oscar, Floyd start promo tour

NEW YORK—IT WAS OSCAR DE La Hoya's turn to take the podium, and he could hardly get a word in.

Floyd Mayweather Jr. was busy yelling back at rowdy fans, posing for pictures and doing everything he could to annoy De La Hoya.

It's The Golden Boy against the Pretty Boy—and, boy, what a scene it was.

"This guy has been under my skin for a while," De La Hoya said Tuesday at the Waldorf-Astoria luxury hotel in midtown Manhattan. It was the first stop of an 11-city promotional tour in advance of their highly anticipated super welterweight title fight on May 5 in Las Vegas.

"He's a little brat," De La Hoya added with a smile. "I'm going to teach him a lesson."

The trash talk flew, mostly from Mayweather's camp, throughout the press conference, which was marked by the type of lavish production that's expected to accompany a fight with the slogan, "The World Awaits."

When De La Hoya (38-4, 30 knockouts) and Mayweather (37-0, 24 KOs) square off at the MGM Grand hotel-casino for De La Hoya's title, the fight is expected to set pay-per-view records and be shown in a record 176 countries. It also sold out in three hours.

With a crowd of close to 200 media and several hundred more fans in attendance, a digital countdown board was displayed outside the press conference and huge promotional posters lined the walls.

Mayweather, looking to win a title in his fifth weight class, was the first to enter the huge ballroom to Queen's "Another One Bites The Dust."

"I'm the top dog in the sport," boasted Mayweather.

When a fan yelled out that heart beats talent any day, Mayweather had the perfect comeback: "Well, 37 fighters had heart," he said, referring to his 37 previous wins "And they all came up short."

The 34-year-old De La Hoya, 2-2 in his last four fights, including a victory over Ricardo Mayorga last May, said he feels as though he's 25—back in his prime.

"This is a fight where maybe it could solidify my legacy," De La Hoya said. "I want to close that book with a happy ending." *AP*

Arenas gets job done with hits and misses

WASHINGTON—TRYING HIS BEST TO SHOOT HIMSELF OUT of a slump, Gilbert Arenas launched a few bricks and rattled a few home Tuesday on his way to 38 points as the Washington Wizards beat the Minnesota Timberwolves, 112-100.

Arenas, who has struggled with his jump shot all month, relied on layups and free throws for most of his points. He went 12-for-24 from the field and 13-for-15 from the line but made only 1 of 8 from 3-point range—including an air ball—and is 10-for-57 behind the arc over his last seven games.

Kevin Garnett led the Timberwolves with 26 points on 8-for-17 shooting and had 13 rebounds.

In Los Angeles, Phoenix guard Steve Nash, Most Valuable Player in the past two seasons, reaggravated his sore right shoulder here Tuesday in the Suns' 115-90 romp over the Los Angeles Clippers.

Nash scored 13 points on 5-of-11 shooting and passed out 12 assists in 27 minutes but watched most of the second half from the bench with a heating pad on his shoulder.

"I'm all right. I took a little bump but I'm fine," Nash said. "I was a little rusty but I got through it."

Shawn Marion scored 31 points and Amare Stoudamire added 22 to spark the Suns, who snapped a three-game losing streak and avoided their first four-game losing skid since early November.

In other NBA games, it was Charlotte 104, New Orleans 100; New York 100, Orlando 94; Detroit 84, Milwaukee 83; San Antonio 95, Denver 80; Chicago 106, Atlanta 81; Sacramento 104, Boston 101; Portland 103, Utah 100 and Seattle 121, Memphis 105.

At Milwaukee, Chauncey Billups scored 19 points to help Detroit hold off Milwaukee.

Milwaukee's Charlie Bell scored on a driving layup to cut the Detroit lead to 1 with 30.9 seconds remaining. Rasheed Wallace then missed an off-balance jumper with the shot clock running out, giving the Bucks a shot at the victory with 7.1 seconds remaining.

At New York, Jamal Crawford and Eddy Curry each scored 20 points to lead New York to its 24th win, surpassing last season's total.

The victory moved them to within three games of the eighth and final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference.

The Orlando Magic and the Miami Heat (26-26) are now tied for seventh place.

Dwight Howard led the Magic with 27 points and 14 rebounds.

At Chicago, Chris Duhon scored 17 points and Chicago held Atlanta without a field goal in the third quarter.

It was the first time the Bulls held a team without a field goal in a quarter. Chicago's previous best was holding the Knicks to a single basket in a quarter in 1999.

Atlanta was outscored 28-8 in the third quarter and finished the period 0-for-16 from the field.

Salim Stoudamire gave the Hawks their first basket of the second half on a three-point play with 10:34 left in the game.

- NBA TODAY (*Basketball TV*)

8 a.m.—Cleveland vs. Toronto (replays @ 4 p.m. & 9:30 p.m.)

UTAH Jazz forward Mehmet Okur (right) gets into a reach-for-the-rebound battle against Portland's frontline. REUTERS

Quirks of match play worry No. 1 Woods

MARANA, ARIZONA—TIGER Woods has compiled some amazing numbers during the longest US PGA Tour winning streak in 62 years. He has won those seven tournaments by a combined 22 shots, is 109 under par and has posted 24 of his last 28 rounds in the 60s.

The math is much more simple at the Accenture Match Play Championship.

To make it eight in a row, he has to win six in a row.

"This has always been one of the tougher events to win just because of the nature of the format," Woods, the No. 1 seed, said Tuesday. "Match play, anything that happens is unpredictable. Sometimes, it takes a great round to advance. Sometimes, you can shoot over par and advance. All I know is you have to beat one guy at a time. You don't have to beat a whole field. Just six guys."

The 64-man field assembled in the high desert of The Gallery Golf Club represents the best in the world from 17 countries. The only guy Woods cares about Wednesday is Ryder Cup teammate JJ Henry, his first opponent.

Woods won in 2004 during his worst season on tour, when he went through another overhaul of his swing. He was in top form two years earlier, winning the Masters and US Open, yet he couldn't get past Peter O'Malley in the first round of the Accenture.

"You can shoot 65 and lose. You can shoot 73 and win," Henry said. "You never know what you're going to get." *AP*

Sports in the year of the Fire Pig

IN HUDDLE

Beth Celis

THE LUNAR YEAR OF THE FIRE PIG MUST be good for Philippine basketball.

Four days into the Chinese new year, the long awaited Fiba ban on the Philippines was lifted, much to the jubilation of the entire Filipino nation.

Just to pay tribute to that lovable boar, I thought of asking some Chinoy friends and associates for a forecast of what they thought the fire pig might bring to the sporting world, based on what they know about its characteristics, if at all they know anything.

However, when I started going through my telephone directory, I started having second thoughts.

***

The list read, in alphabetical order, Alfrancis Chua, Go Teng Kok, Graham Lim, Tony Chua, James Yap. I don't think these guys would be inclined to reply.

After all, Alfrancis is no longer coach of Sta. Lucia, GTK is still mourning his mother's death, Graham Lim is having deportation problems and James must be too focused on solving his marital troubles.

In the face of such depressing predicaments, who'd care about a silly pig.

Red Bull team manager Tony Chua seemed to be my only hope.

I decided to send the text questionnaire anyway, just for the heck of it, expecting to get only one reply—from Tony Chua.

***

Surprisingly, I got three out of five which was not a bad batting average.

Graham was the first to respond. He said the year of the fire pig was most auspicious for a rooster like him and if he was ambitious, "I should go for it because it's my best opportunity this year."

Whatever it was he planned to go after, Graham did not say, but he said he would go after it.

***

Since he wasn't much into Chinese horoscopes, GTK said he could not comment about it. But he could say a thing or two about feng shui if I cared to listen.

"*Paniwala-paniwala ako sa* feng shui. *Talagang tutoo yan. Dati* I didn't believe and I paid dearly for it.

GTK related that in 1968 when his wife was carrying their first child, he was warned one day by his geomancer to monitor the condition of the unborn infant, otherwise it would die if it was a boy (and live it was a girl).

Since that was the pre-ultrasound days, there was no way of knowing the gender of a baby before it was born.

GTK did not heed the prognostication.

The baby was born prematurely and as predicted, did not live a day. It was a boy.

***

In 1992, 24 years after that bad experience, another prophet of doom crossed GTK's path.

"It was the year of the monkey and I was warned that it was a bad year for me. The geomancer said two big catastrophes were headed my way and if I wanted to avert or lessen its impact, I should perform some rites, follow certain guidelines.

"I ignored the counsel."

"That year, my factory was razed to the ground and I was involved in a big scandal where I was suspected of kidnapping."

The moral of the story according to GTK, is not to go into feng shui if you do not believe in it.

***

Tony Chua called, only to say that he doesn't know the first thing about Chinese horoscopes or the fire pig. "I only know the roasted lechon, Tita Beth," he said. I didn't hear from James, but I think I know why. I am not in his directory because it's Kris (Aquino) I've been corresponding with all this time. It was all quiet on the Chualay front.

***

For the last 5 games of the PBI's Silver Cup, people have been noticing Harbour Centre owner Mikee Romero wearing the same apple green shirt. Harbour has won every one of these games.

Soon, everyone in the Harbour gallery was following Mikee's fashion statement. Everyone started wearing green.

After his team won the championship, Mikee admitted he had followed the feng shui master's advice. He had consulted the expert for a business project and in the course of the counseling, he was adviced that his winning color was green.

"Under his guidance, the business flourished and our team won. What's funny is, I never told anyone about this color advice. Everyone just followed my color coding."

The 3rd INTERNATIONAL
Philippine Marathon
for the
PASIG RIVER
25 FEBRUARY 2007

The three-year old International Philippine Marathon for the Pasig River continues to be a more competitive race every year. After it has earned international accreditation from the US-based International Association of Athletic Federations (IAAF) and the Association of International Marathons and Road Races (AIMS) in January 2005, more noted runners, local and, as foreseen, international, are expected to participate this year.

As an international event, the Philippine Marathon for the Pasig River is included in the official list and schedule of marathons in the world and race results are internationally recognized and accepted.

The Marathon is held every last Sunday of February to advocate for the rehabilitation of the Pasig River. Since the early 1990s, efforts of rehabilitating this once majestic River has been pushed actively by the government and private sectors such as Clean and Green Foundation, Inc. Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission (PRRC) is the government office mandated to revitalize the Pasig River and the Clean and Green Foundation, Inc. sits as one of its three private sector representatives.

The Philippine Marathon for the Pasig River plays a key role in elevating the advocacy for the Pasig River to an international level. The Philippine Marathon for the Pasig River will ply the original 42-kilometer course from Fort Santiago in the old city of Manila to the Global City of Fort Bonifacio, making it a tour of the country's historical sites and districts and highlighting the Pasig River by passing 11 out of its 13 bridges.

It is a hybrid of physical prowess, environmental advocacy, and historical and cultural awareness as it seeks to refocus attention to and awaken more concern for the Pasig River's rehabilitation.

This is a project of the Clean and Green Foundation, Inc. for the Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission.

For interested parties and partners, you may call the Clean and Green Foundation, Inc. at telephone numbers 527-6376 / 78 / 79, email us at cgfi@itextron.com or check our website, www.philippinemarathon.com.

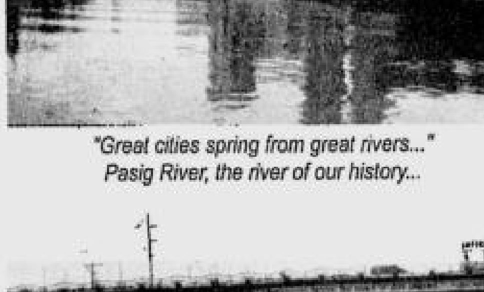
Each step closer to a Pasig River ALIVE!

Accredited by: Sanctioned by: In cooperation with:

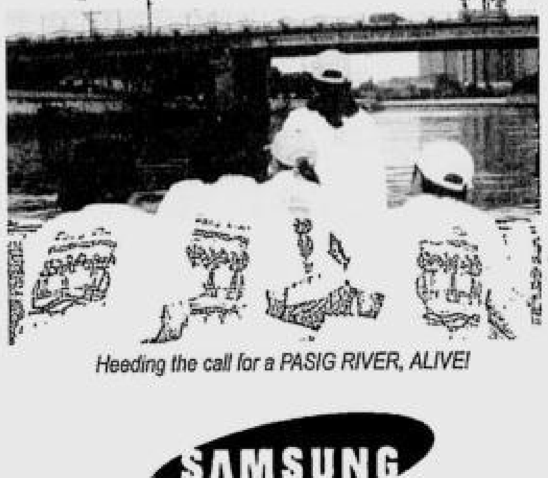
An advocacy program of the Clean and Green Foundation, Inc. for the PASIG RIVER REHABILITATION COMMISSION

"A great challenge has been posed to us Filipinos. The challenge is to reclaim a natural heritage - the PASIG RIVER."

-Mrs. Amelita M. Ramos, Former First Lady
Chairperson, Clean and Green Foundation, Inc.



"Great cities spring from great rivers..."
Pasig River, the river of our history...



Heeding the call for a PASIG RIVER, ALIVE!

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Pacquiao to grace 'Moment of Truth'

Cancels Palawan trip for Cebu bouts

By Salven L. Lagumbay, *Contributor*

CEBU CITY—NATIONAL BOXING HERO Manny Pacquiao has indicated he will be at ringside for this Saturday's huge "Moment of Truth" card headlined by the WBO super flyweight title fight between reigning champion Fernando Montiel and Cebuano Z Gorres.

A source from Pacquiao's camp told reporters here that the world's best pound-for-pound boxer is coming to Cebu for the fight.

An INQUIRER sports column on Wednesday penned by Recah Trinidad and entitled "Pacquiao Snubbing World Fight?" is said to have helped convince the celebrated fighter to change plans.

Pacquiao had been invited by Palawan Gov. Joel Reyes to grace the inauguration of a facility that will house members of the province's Adopt-A-Boxer program.

In a message sent to the INQUIRER, Reyes rued Pacquiao's impending no-show in Palawan.

"That's too bad for Palaweños," the governor said. "He (Pacquiao) had committed and confirmed four times to me personally."

A close Pacquiao associate yesterday called up Trinidad's son, Chino, to confirm that Pacquiao would leave Gen. Santos City to watch the Cebu fight card, which also features the WBO Intercontinental super bantamweight title bout between Rey "Boom Boom" Bautista and Mexican Marino Gonzalez.

PACQUIAO

Like Pacquiao, Gorres and Bautista train under Trainer of the Year Freddie Roach in Hollywood's Wild Card Gym.

Roach will skip this Saturday's event, though, as he is joining an 11-city press tour for the Oscar De La Hoya-Floyd Mayweather showdown on May 5.

Trainer Nonoy Neri, an assistant to Pacquiao's Filipino trainer Buboy Fernandez, also confirmed Pacquiao's trip to Cebu.

Pacquiao has started training in Gen. Santos for his April 14 clash with Mexican Jorge Solis, and is expected to fly to Los Angeles next week to hook up with Roach.

Roach had invited Pacquiao to fly to Puerto Rico to train alongside De la Hoya, an offer the Filipino icon has described as interesting.

Boom Boom has new foe

CEBU CITY—REY "BOOM BOOM" BAUTISTA will have a new foe in Mexican Marino Gonzalez for the "Moment of Truth" card on Saturday after his original opponent, Feider Viloria, encountered transit visa problems in Europe.

Gonzalez, of Navojoa, Mexico, and Bautista will slug it out for the vacant WBO intercontinental super bantamweight and WBO World Youth super bantamweight crowns.

The 25-year-old Gonzalez (29-8-0, 15 KOs) has stopped seven of his 15 KO victims in the first two rounds, six of them right in the first.

Gonzalez, together with international matchmaker Sampson Lewkowicz, is expected here Friday afternoon.

Lewkowicz, in an overseas call to Filipino promoter Sammy Gello-ani, said that reigning WBC Latino super bantam titlist Viloria failed to secure a transit visa in time for his departure for Cebu. The official weigh-in at Rajah Park Hotel is on Feb 23.

WBO president Francisco "Paco" Valcarcel of Puerto Rico is set to arrive today.

WBO vice-president Leon Panoncillo said Valcarcel accepted the invitation of Oscar De La Hoya and sportsman Antonio L. Aldeguer.

A press conference will be held today to be attended by GBP vice-president Eric Gomez, Lewkowicz and all main event boxers in the fight card. *Salven L. Lagumbay, Contrtibutor*

METRO
Citizen's Call

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Your stories. Tell us all about it.

- Did a signage make your day?
- Garbage dumped on your street unmake your day?
- Street diggings forever on the street where you live?
- Are you up in arms against the demolition of an ancestral house?
- Awed by a little-known barangay project with a big positive impact in your community?
- Got stuck in potholes?
- Fed up with cussing and feuding neighbors?
- Is there an everyday role model in your neighborhood?
- Delightful/dreadful finds on your way to work?

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PS: Please don't send tips on criminal activities and scams. Call the police.
INQUIRER

ADBOARD GOES "Back to the Future"

ADBOARD

The Advertising Board of the Philippines (ADBOARD) will induct its 2007 Officers and Board of Directors tonight, February 22, 2007 at 7:00 P.M, 33rd floor, Taipan Room, Tower Club, Philamlife Tower, Paseo De Roxas Makati City. This year's theme is Back to the Future: Strength of the Past, Foundation for the Future.

The AdBoard's new set of officers include: Chairman Andre Kahn (President & CEO of J. Romero & Associates), Vice Chair Blen Fernando (VP-Marketing of Alaska Milk Corp.), Treasurer Egay Navalta (President of Advtg. Suppliers Assoc. of the Phils.), Corp. Secretary Atty. Junie Lutian (Sr. Legal Counsel-External Relations of Procter & Gamble) and PR Officer Lucien Dy Tioco (VP-Advertising of The Philippine Star).

Members of the Board are: Yoly Ong (Group Chairperson of Campaigns & Grey), Nonna Nañagas (President of Dentsu Phils.), Randy Mari Aquino (Managing Director of BBDO-GO), Khalil Khodr, Jr. (Managing Director of Sell Co.), Jose Sy (President of Film-Ads), RJ Esteban (Managing Director of PSRC-RI), Carlo Llave (President & General Manager of The Fourth Dimension), Raul Alvarez (AVP-Marketing Services of PLDT), Jones Campos (PR Head of Globe Telecom), Pepito Olarte (VP-Advertising of Philippine Daily Inquirer) Tessie Celestino-Howard (President of Airtime Marketing Phils.) and Alex Castro III (Executive Director of AdBoard).

Guest Speaker and inducting officer is Minyong Ordoñez, Chairman Emeritus of Publicis Manila.

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Lakas ng hatak.
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PSALM head quits; Transco rebid seen in '08

ICTSI exec eyed as replacement

By Abigail L. Ho

THE HEAD OF PRIVATE SECTOR ASSETS AND Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM) has resigned, less than three weeks after the bidding for the nationwide transmission grid Transco was declared a failure.

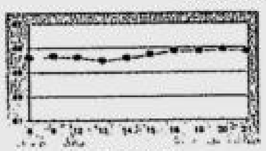
Nieves Osorio, whose resignation was accepted by Malacañang yesterday, said her leaving the government would give her the chance "to take a much needed break" and was not at all prompted by the failed Transco bidding.

"I would like to take this occasion to dispel speculations that I have been forced to tender my resignation because of the outcome of the bidding for the 25-year concession of the Transco," she said.

"As early as last year, I have made a personal commitment that I will finish this specific transac-

PSALM/ B3

INDICATORS



FEBRUARY

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As of 5 p.m., Feb. 21, 2007

Clark row to test sanctity of contracts in RP

By Daxim L. Lucas

(First of two parts)

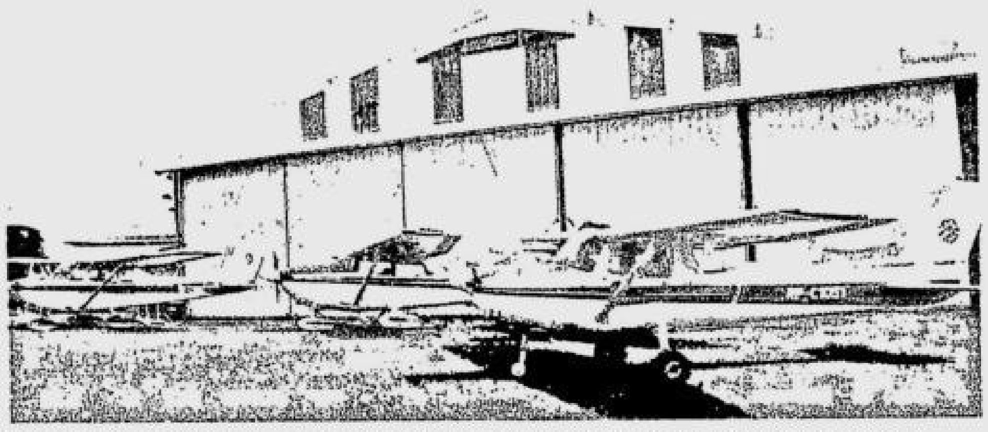
SPECIAL REPORT

FORMER AIRLINE PILOT BEN HUR D. Gomez never thought he would hit it big when he decided to set up a flying school amid the desolate Pampanga landscape in 1993.

Having retired from Philippine Airlines, he decided to rehabilitate a small airstrip parallel to the twin runways of the former Clark Air Base, despite the entire location being covered by lahar from the eruption of nearby Mount Pinatubo.

His idea was to set up a flying center for recreational flyers and aviation enthusiasts.

Today, Omni Aviation Corp. is acknowledged as one of the best aeronautical schools in the country, training both local and foreign students for the seemingly insatiable needs of the global airline industry.



OMNI Aviation Corp. is acknowledged as one of the best aeronautical schools in the country, training both local and foreign students for the seemingly insatiable needs of the global airline industry.

Gomez is now facing a different challenge: Clark Development Corp. (CDC), the owner of the property, wants to reclaim the 32-hectare property for itself, despite a solid 25-year lease contract held by Omni Aviation.

Faced with eviction notices and other tactics, which he claimed was plain harassment, the former Boeing 747 pilot is in for the fight of his life.

CLARK/ B3

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BUSINESSBRIEFS

PAL net loss down to $2.9M

PHILIPPINE AIRLINES REPORTED A net loss of $2.9 million for the quarter ending in December 2006. The figure was 6.45 percent lower than the net loss of $3.1 million, which PAL posted the previous fiscal year, according to documents filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Revenue for the quarter rose 1.5 percent to $303.4 million from the $298.93 million PAL posted in the same period of 2005.

Total expenses rose 1.4 percent to $306.4 million from the $302 million in 2005. *Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson*

Tan unit turns into property firm

SETTING its sights on the burgeoning property sector, Balabac Resources and Holdings Co. of the Lucio Tan Group of Companies, will undergo restructuring to become Eton Properties Phils. Inc.

As Eton Properties, it will embark in the development of condominiums, buildings and resorts. The company is now talking to Philippine Airlines Inc. for a possible joint venture to develop the PAL property on Legaspi Street in Makati City.

Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

SM Prime net income up 10%

SM PRIME Holdings Inc. reported a 10-percent growth in its 2006 net income to P5.45 billion due to mall sales.

It also announced a P7-billion budget for four new malls this year and the expansion of three existing malls, it said in a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange. *Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson*

ALI to borrow P5B

AYALA LAND INC. plans to borrow around P5 billion this year to partly fund the expansion of its malls and offices catering to business process outsourcing firms, ALI chief finance officer Jaime Ysmael said.

ALI in April has maturing bonds worth P3 billion, which it plans to service using its cash pile of P9.6 billion, he said.

ALI has set aside P16.2 billion for capital expenditures this year, P2.4 billion higher than the P13.8 billion in 2006. *Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson*

Business with pressure

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

NOBODY CAN SAY IF IT IS HIS Lenten penitence, but Napocor president Cyril del Callar seems to take the blame, on his own, for the operations of the Napocor "mafia."

Word has it that Gloriaetta has put the pressure on Del Callar recently, subjecting him to a little dressing-down over Napocor's multimillion-peso business deals.

One involves the coal-fired plant in Cebu, which will be owned and operated by the South Korean firm Kepco and local company Salcon.

Another is the Lanao Hydro Development Corp., or LHDC, which is owned by ex-Napocor officials. Get it?

In effect, Napocor favored those groups over other private power firms, handing over to the former Napocor's "live" supply contracts with electric utilities, along with a captive market *(Breaktime Feb. 6)*.

But the deals have turned into a political issue, particularly in the Lanao area.

Under the agreement, the electricity rates in the area will double from the present P2.10 per kwh to P4.32 per.

I heard that Rep. Abdullah "Bobby" Dimaporo, who belongs to that family of political kingpins in Lanao, went straight to Gloriaetta to complain about the deal.

Now, that area became famous for the "Lanao votes" during the Marcos regime, delivering votes like the place had a giant Xerox machine.

Apparently, Gloriaetta does not want to antagonize the kingpins there. Not only is Napocor bad for business, it is also bad for politics.

Aray!

* * *

BEHIND her back, her own people refer to SSS president and CEO Corazon de la Paz as "Ms Baron Travel Girl," apparently due to her constant travelling abroad.

For at least 15 days of last January, for instance, De la Paz was abroad.

She never fails to point out to media that her travels are "officially approved."

In other words, what are we yakking for?

Okay, but do her numerous "officially approved" trips mean that the SSS does not need her, the chief executive, in the office to take care of business? If so, does it mean that the pension fund, belonging to all 27 million of us SSS members, is better off with De la Paz always absent? Hers were "officially approved" trips, aren't they?

So, boss-ma'am, who is running the SSS?

Recent press statements from the propagandist of De La Paz credit her for the increase in the SSS collection over the past months.

As everybody in SSS knows, credit goes to its career EVP Horace Templo, who campaigned among volunteer members, particularly self-employed professionals like doctors and lawyers, for a higher contribution, calling it their patriotic duty.

De la Paz also sits as director of other private corporations. One of them is Ayala Land, which belongs to the Ayala group, a main force behind the Makati Business Club, which called for the resignation of Gloriaetta only some months ago.

Thus, if De la Paz is abroad, the SSS management meetings are cancelled, or postponed. She uses the little time she has left for her other directorship jobs.

Here is the beef: The SSS investigating committee just found out that its IT system has collapsed. The servers are neglected. Some are not even functioning.

Again, boss-ma'am, who is running the SSS?

* * *

AGRICULTURE Secretary Arthur Yap was just a student of Gloriaetta in college, but he makes a lot of sense.

For instance, in the trillion-peso infrastructure plan of this cute administration, Yap asks for the DA share to go to roads, more roads, and still more roads.

And no, he is not eyeing the DPWH position. Another ex-general is said to be after that lucrative position. This would place the number of generals in the Cabinet to five.

Perhaps, Yap believes that agriculture, as we know it in this country, can only thrive on investments in infrastructure.

Look, we are supposedly an agriculture country, with roughly 70 percent of the population still dependent on the land for livelihood.

That should make us a great food producer. But we are not, and it is because our kind of agriculture is much older than Jovy and JPE combined.

We never really invested on agriculture. And if Yap succeeds in putting up all those roads to open up more agricultural land, I'd say I like this guy already.

* * *

DO YOU ever wonder why our sports leaders are always fighting, such as the well-publicized dogfight for control of the Basketball Association of the Philippines?

It may have something to do with business. Word goes around that sports associations in this country take advantage of their privileges for tax and duty-free importation.

Every year, this country imports billions of pesos worth of food supplements, sports garments, equipment and what-have-you, for athletes.

Sports associations do a lot of importing.

Somehow, by some mysterious force of nature, the goods find their way to the malls.

That, in another place and time, is simply known as smuggling.

And so, who is this owner of a famous chain of health-stuff stores found in all the major malls in the country, who also happens to be a director of a sports association?

Nobody knows if the individual has good friends at the Bureau of Customs.

Shares close 0.10% higher on brighter prospects

SHARE PRICES YESTERDAY closed 0.10 percent higher as brighter economic prospects overcame profit-taking earlier in the day, dealers said.

Investor confidence is high, especially with government now saying it is intent on maintaining economic momentum, dealers added.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index was up 3.61 points at 3,378.92 after moving from a high of 3,417.08.

The broader all-share index rose 8.57 points to 2,151.66.

Gainers beat losers 87 to 43, while 45 stocks were unchanged. Volume amounted to 10.2 billion shares worth P5.9 billion ($123 million).

The peso during the day traded at 48.12 to the dollar.

"Investor confidence is really high, especially with the government now saying it is intent on maintaining economic momentum," said Ron Rodrigo, an analyst with Unicapital Securities Inc.

Dealers said investors also prefer to invest in stocks instead of government securities and other fixed-income instruments with rates on benchmark Treasury bills at record lows.

The market, however, appears to be overheating, said Summit Securities president Harry Liu, and may need to take a breather before attempting to retest the 3,400 point resistance level.

"The market is in overbought condition after extended rallies, so we can expect some correction to take place before it builds up momentum to get to the all-time high level," said Liu.

Top-traded Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. gained P10 to P2,605, while rival Globe Telecom Inc advanced P15 to P1,370.

Ayala Land Inc. shed 25 centavos to P16.75.

Food and beverage conglomerate San Miguel Corp.'s A-shares advanced one peso to P67, and its B shares were flat at P78.50. *AFP*

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of February 21, 2007)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	14	14	12	12	1,530,300
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	64	64.5	63.5	63.5	2,661,700
Bank of the Phil. Islands	70	70	69.5	70	915,700
China Banking Corp.	895	900	895	900	5,520
Citystate Savings Bank	19.75	19.75	19.75	19.75	400
Export and Ind. Bank A	0.55	0.6	0.55	0.59	60,780,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	115	116	114	114	26,870
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	67.5	67.5	66.5	66.5	1,354,700
Phil. Bank of Comm. A	59	62	59	62	7,700
Philippine National Bank	54.5	55	54.5	54.5	344,900
Phil. Savings Bank	66	68	66	67	36,200
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	43.5	44	43.5	43.5	227,300
Security Bank Corp.	87	89	86	89	385,100
Union Bank of the Phil.	66	66.5	65	66	24,400
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
Bankard Inc.	0.76	0.76	0.73	0.73	500,000
Citiseconline.Com Inc.	6.3	6.3	6.1	6.3	1,162,000
Filipino Fund Inc.	6	6	6	6	6,000
First Metro Invest. Corp.	37	37	37	37	1,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	1615	1615	1615	1615	230
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	2.08	2.16	2.08	2.1	1,365,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	680	690	635	640	10,650
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2170	2190	2150	2150	560
Ivantage Corp.	1.74	1.76	1.72	1.76	3,740,000
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
PNOC Energy Dev. Corp.	5.6	5.7	5.5	5.6	16,749,000
First Gen Corp.	59.5	60	57.5	57.5	276,200
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	81	82.5	80	80	813,900
Manila Electric Co. A	78.5	79	78	78.5	837,200
Manila Electric Co. B	78.5	79.5	78	78.5	846,400
Manila Water Co. Inc.	9.8	9.9	9.8	9.8	3,284,000
Petron Corp.	4.8	5	4.8	4.85	15,148,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.3	0.31	0.29	0.31	1,320,000
Trans-Asia Oil And Energy	1.54	1.58	1.52	1.52	2,095,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.95	3.95	3.95	3.95	5,000
Cen Azucar de Tarlac	2.85	2.85	2.85	2.85	110,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	26.5	27	26.5	26.5	92,100
Jollibee Foods Corp.	50.5	53	50.5	53	428,000
RFM Corp.	1.62	1.62	1.56	1.56	45,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	2.65	2.65	2.65	2.65	167,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.47	0.47	0.47	0.47	100,000
San Miguel Corp. A	66	67	66	67	210,500
San Miguel Corp. B	78.5	78.5	78	78.5	106,100
Tanduay Holdings, Inc.	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1	5,000
Alliance Tuna Int'l. Inc.	2.08	2.08	2.06	2.08	930,000
Universal Robina Corp.	20.5	20.75	20.25	20.25	5,731,100
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	1.88	2	1.86	1.9	101,517,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	4.7	5.2	4.7	5	12,203,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	4	4	4	4	95,000
Holcim Philippines, Inc.	8.7	8.8	8.6	8.7	7,224,000
Republic Cement Corp.	6.8	6.8	6.5	6.5	880,000
CHEMICALS					
Chemrez Technologies Inc.	5.5	5.5	5.3	5.4	4,850,000
Metro Alliance Holdings	0.6	0.87	0.6	0.85	510,000
Metro Alliance Hldgs B	0.6	0.81	0.6	0.81	810,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Active Alliance Inc.	3	3	3	3	1,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.36	0.41	0.36	0.38	132,310,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Asia Amalgamated Holdings	0.7	0.76	0.68	0.72	260,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.014	0.014	0.013	0.013	174,400,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.014	0.014	0.014	0.014	77,000,000
Ayala Corp.	630	635	620	620	874,050
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.81	0.82	0.81	0.81	760,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	8.7	9	8.7	8.9	11,921,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.07	0.075	0.07	0.0725	139,000,000
A. Soriano Corp.	3.2	3.3	3.2	3.25	2,859,000
APC Group Inc.	0.44	0.44	0.42	0.42	22,060,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.013	0.014	0.013	0.014	330,100,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	1.2	1.22	1.14	1.14	6,773,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	42,000
ATN Holdings Inc. B	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	10,000
PAL Holdings Inc.	3.65	3.65	3.6	3.6	130,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	2.46	2.6	2.2	2.2	824,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	10.5	10.5	10.25	10.5	128,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	4.45	4.45	4.25	4.25	24,398,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	7.3	7.8	7.3	7.6	16,439,000
Fil-Estate Corp.	0.9	0.92	0.9	0.92	160,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	5.5	5.8	5.4	5.8	13,289,000
F&J Prince Holdings Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	100,000
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.33	0.33	0.32	0.32	150,000
House of Investments Inc.	3.15	3.55	3.15	3.4	2,584,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	14	14.5	14	14	2,222,500
Keppel Holdings	2	2	2	2	84,000
Medco Holdings	0.4	0.4	0.39	0.4	340,000
Mabuhay Holdings Corp.	0.8	0.88	0.8	0.87	280,000
Magnum Holdings Inc.	8.8	9.2	8.5	9	3,622,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	2.5	2.55	2.1	2.1	11,696,000
Pacifica	0.02	0.021	0.02	0.02	100,200,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.25	0.26	0.25	0.26	2,860,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.5	1.7	1.5	1.7	22,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.79	0.81	0.79	0.81	1,690,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.19	0.215	0.19	0.195	69,040,000
SM Investments Corp.	397.5	397.5	387.5	387.5	126,250
South China Resources Inc.	1.14	1.14	1.14	1.14	80,000
Seafront Resources Corp.	1.68	1.7	1.68	1.68	274,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.185	0.185	0.18	0.18	900,000
Zeus Holdings Inc.	0.48	0.55	0.48	0.48	780,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	17	17	16.75	16.75	11,117,900
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.52	0.54	0.51	0.51	810,000
Belle Corp.	1.56	1.64	1.56	1.56	44,859,000
A. Brown Co. Inc.	1.52	1.52	1.42	1.42	3,003,000
Cityland Development Corp.	2.2	2.7	2.2	2.7	1,446,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.47	0.48	0.47	0.47	5,360,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	3.9	3.9	3.8	3.9	168,000
C&P Homes Inc.	2.65	2.8	2.65	2.65	2,512,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.34	0.34	0.33	0.33	4,720,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.235	0.29	0.235	0.28	4,980,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.83	0.89	0.83	0.87	179,640,000
Edsa Prop. Holdings Inc.	1.74	1.78	1.74	1.78	230,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.0725	0.075	0.0725	0.0725	9,100,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.88	2.04	1.88	1.9	127,743,000
Gotesco Land Inc.	0.28	0.28	0.27	0.27	1,800,000
Gotesco Land Inc. B	0.29	0.3	0.28	0.29	510,000
Interport Res.	0.012	0.014	0.012	0.013	714,000,000
Interport Res. B	0.013	0.014	0.013	0.013	351,100,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.54	0.56	0.54	0.55	8,440,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	1.04	1.06	0.96	0.97	26,970,000
Megaworld Corp.	3.35	3.35	3.25	3.25	41,265,000
Metro Pacific Inv. Corp.	5	5.1	4.9	5	221,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.38	0.4	0.38	0.4	9,380,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.21	0.215	0.21	0.21	680,000
Polar Property Holdings	2.7	2.8	2.7	2.8	30,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	22	23	22	22.75	363,200
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.76	0.76	0.7	0.72	125,540,000
SM Development Corp.	4.35	4.55	4.35	4.4	2,731,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	12.25	12.75	12.25	12.75	6,247,100
Suntrust Home Dev. Inc.	0.73	0.74	0.71	0.71	1,000,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.13	0.14	0.13	0.13	14,820,000
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	26	26.5	26	26	214,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp	1.08	1.08	1.08	1.08	2,000
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	2	2	1.98	1.98	13,700,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	1385	1385	1355	1370	221,140
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	7.1	7.3	7.1	7.2	6,359,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	2600	2675	2600	2605	327,370
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.35	0.36	0.31	0.32	23,500,000
Imperial Res.	0.019	0.021	0.019	0.021	13,600,000
Ionics Inc.	2.48	2.48	2.44	2.44	215,000
IPVG Corp.	6	6	5.4	5.5	4,501,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.055	0.055	0.055	0.055	200,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.06	0.06	0.0575	0.06	24,300,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.36	1.36	1.36	1.36	229,000
Transpacific Broadband	2.38	2.65	2.34	2.6	5,239,000
Philweb Corp.	0.046	0.055	0.045	0.047	1,385,800,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	4.15	4.4	4.15	4.4	39,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	29	29	28.5	28.5	987,700
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	1.12	1.2	1.12	1.2	142,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	2.95	3.05	2.9	3	8,543,000
Philippine Racing Club	3.05	3.05	3.05	3.05	56,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.88	1	0.87	0.92	5,680,000
EDUCATION					
Ipeople Inc.	3.6	3.7	3.6	3.6	1,222,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Macroasia Corp.	2.6	2.65	2.5	2.5	1,585,000
Paxys Inc.	28	28.5	28	28.5	325,800
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	6	6.1	5.8	6.1	690,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	6.1	6.1	6.1	6.1	387,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.011	0.012	0.011	0.011	165,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	9.1	9.1	9	9	729,000
Benguet Corp. A	11.25	11.25	11.25	11.25	30,000
Geograce Res. Phil. Inc.	1.74	1.78	1.46	1.5	251,407,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	18,310,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.3	0.31	0.3	0.31	14,770,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.027	0.029	0.027	0.029	1,331,600,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.031	0.033	0.031	0.033	849,400,000
Omico Corp.	0.013	0.015	0.013	0.015	1,366,700,000
Philex Mining Corp.	4.1	4.1	4	4	10,603,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	18.5	18.75	18.25	18.75	266,300
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.69	0.7	0.69	0.69	290,000
Vulcan Ind'l	1.18	1.22	1.14	1.16	6,528,000
OIL					
Basic Petroleum Corp.	0.3	0.33	0.3	0.31	10,950,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.014	0.015	0.014	0.015	217,300,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.014	0.015	0.014	0.015	220,500,000
The Philodrill Corp.	0.012	0.013	0.012	0.012	1,204,900,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	10	10.25	10	10	132,000

CURRENCIES

February 21, 2007 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.760919	1.000000	48.0540
Japan	Yen	0.006344	0.008337	0.4006
United Kingdom	Pound	1.487977	1.955500	93.9696
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.097392	0.127992	6.1505
Switzerland	Franc	0.615630	0.809061	38.8786
Canada	Dollar	0.650414	0.854774	41.0753
Singapore	Dollar	0.496424	0.652401	31.3505
Australia	Dollar	0.597455	0.785176	37.7308
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.018353	2.652520	127.4642
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.202895	0.266645	12.8134
Brunei	Dollar	0.494811	0.650280	31.2486
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000084	0.000110	0.0053
Thailand	Baht	0.022714	0.029851	1.4345
UAE	Dirham	0.207222	0.272331	13.0866
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.314200	63.1526
Korea	Won	0.000811	0.001066	0.0512
China	Yuan**	0.098114	0.128941	6.1961
Argentina	Peso	0.245260	0.322321	15.4888
Brazil	Real	0.364076	0.478469	22.9923
Denmark	Kroner	0.134118	0.176258	8.4699
India	Rupee	0.017246	0.022665	1.0891
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.217904	0.286369	13.7612
Mexico	New Peso	0.069244	0.091000	4.3729
New Zealand	Dollar	0.533006	0.700476	33.6607
South Africa	Rand	0.107036	0.140667	6.7596
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023069	0.030317	1.4569

Source: Reuters' forex closing prices as of NY Time—Feb. 20, 2007

* Various banks in Bahrain as quoted in Reuters' Screen. ** Asian time closing rate as of Feb. 15, 2007

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Property mart seen to stay hot

By Daxim L. Lucas

THE LOCAL PROPERTY MARKET will continue to appreciate in the near future and remains far from the bubble the country experienced just before the onset of the 1997 East Asian financial crisis.

This was the prognosis made yesterday by property consultant CB Richard Ellis Philippines Inc., which noted that most property developments at present—especially those in the market for high-rise condominiums—are sold out even before they get built.

"The 'pre-selling' phenomenon in the residential condominium market is once more becoming a practice among developers since its prominence in the pre-Asian financial crisis years," the company said in a statement.

"Immediately after conceptualization, major property developers without delay launch their project to the market, both local and abroad," it added. "Last year, some new projects in Makati and Fort Bonifacio were sold even before the project actually broke ground." CB Richard Ellis pointed out that recent trends "seem to be a repeat" of market conditions just prior to the 1997 crash.

The company pointed out that back then, residential condominiums got built and were acquired by speculators in anticipation of demand for leasing from foreign and local tenants.

"These speculators got burned when they built all these units as tenants did not come as expected," the company said. "It took several years before the oversupply was filled up and to justify new condominium developments."

The current rebound in the residential condominium segment of the property industry, however, has surprised skeptics as to its depth and duration. According to CB Richard Ellis, the present crop of buyers are end-users—both local and foreign—who dominate the buying activity in the market. In contrast, the last property market boom was characterized by heavy speculative activity among "affluent locals."

According to the company, the main driver of the ongoing property boom is the large expatriate Filipino community, which sent home more than $14 billion in remittances last year.

At present, there are an estimated eight million Filipinos either residing abroad permanently or working on contract basis.

The firm said that most overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) are now buying condominium units—a palpable shift from the old trend of preferring house and lot units.

"The elitist stigma of owning a condominium unit has changed over time," the company said. "The growing middle class, with their strong purchasing power, could now afford residential condominium units for their basic need for accommodation."

PSALM head quits . . .

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tion. The final result may have not been up to PSALM's and the national government's expectations or my own personal wishes. But this specific transaction has been completed," she said.

Rumored to replace her as PSALM head is International Container Terminals Services Inc. director and treasurer Jose Ibazeta.

This developed as the rebidding for the 25-year National Transmission Corp. (Transco) concession, the fourth since 2003, will likely be shelved until next year.

In a recent presentation, Presidential Chief of Staff Joey Salceda showed that the privatization target for the Transco concession had been moved to 2008.

However, Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla, who also sits as vice chair of PSALM, said they were still weighing all possible options.

"We promise to discuss this in the PSALM board. We are seriously considering all our options. I'd rather not speculate," he said, adding that Salceda was just being conservative when he placed the Transco bidding date for next year instead of this year.

He said it was also possible that Salceda might have been referring to the possibility of getting money from the Transco deal only by 2008, and not on conducting the rebidding next year.

"It is possible that the assumption there is that the money will be remitted to the government by next year even if the rebidding is done this year," he explained.

Another possibility, he said, was that Salceda might have been considering that RA 9136, or the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001, would first be amended before conducting a rebidding.

The acquisition of a franchise to operate, maintain and expand the nationwide transmission grid was also a consideration, he said.

"Even if you rebid without a franchise, you will still need to secure that. That's something that we can discuss with lawmakers. Some say that if there is a transferable franchise available, then they are willing to take the risk of applying for it from Congress," he said.

Clark row . . .

From page B1

More importantly, the case also brings to the fore the issue on the sanctity of contracts in the local setting—long cited by investors as one of the biggest deterrents to doing business in the Philippines.

Pinatubo damage

The idea of setting up a flying school came to Gomez after he surveyed the Clark Aero Club site—an 840-meter airstrip used for general aviation (mainly small private planes) just outside the perimeter of Clark Air Base.

"When we first came here, the whole area was covered in waist-deep lahar. We cleaned it up," Gomez said in an interview, saying that he was one of the first locators in the area ravaged by Pinatubo's mudflows.

"I told Antonio Henson, the first CDC boss, 'I'll help Clark. There's no money in [setting up] an aero club, but I'll give you a high profile, high visibility industry'," he added.

On Feb. 1, 1994, Omni Aviation signed a 25-year lease with CDC for the property. In exchange for the airstrip and two decrepit buildings, Omni Aviation agreed to pay CDC a minimum guaranteed lease plus 10 percent of revenues, plus 20 percent of rental income from any sub-lessees.

From a two-plane operation, Omni Aviation now has eight trainer aircraft serving a steady stream of pilot trainees.

The company also hosts the basic flight training facilities of flag carrier Philippine Airlines, which has been struggling to retain pilots and scrambling to train new ones amid the poaching binge of richer Middle Eastern carriers.

"We currently have students from 26 countries," Gomez said, boasting that his safety record is also unparalleled. "We are the premiere flying school in the country, and we have had a perfect training record for the past 12 years."

Eviction notice

With the stigma of Pinatubo slowly fading, the government began making big plans for Clark.

The most recent incarnation of this plan is to transform the former military base into a hub that will replace the Ninoy Aquino International Airport by 2015 as the country's premiere aviation facility.

Three years into their 25-year lease, then CDC president Romeo David wrote Omni Aviation, informing them of a master development plan for the entire Clark economic zone—a plan that excludes the activities of the flying school.

"Basically, they wanted us to close shop and move out of the area," Gomez said. "But I have a valid contract."

What followed, the pilot claimed, was a string of harassment activities initiated by CDC management, including attempts to shut down his training center for allegedly posing a hazard to commercial air traffic at Diosdado Macapagal International Airport (DMIA).

"That's simply not true," he said. "I used to be head of security and safety for PAL. I know what safety is about."

Recently, CDC officials informed Omni Aviation that the property it currently occupied would be transformed into a repair, maintenance and overhaul (RMO) facility for DMIA.

Gomez suspected that CDC's reason for trying to evict his flying school was economic and political.

"It's simple," he said. "They can't make money out of me." *(To be concluded)*

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34th INDUCTION CEREMONIES

Chamber of Real Estate and Builders' Associations, Inc.

A real estate industry on the upward swing, thanks to the new middle class economy of the OFWs, and no thanks to strict regulations, ever increasing housing materials and a cartelized cement industry, greets the new set of officers this year of the Chamber of Real Estate and Builders' Associations, Inc. as they take their oath in the induction ceremonies to be held tonight at the Grand Ballroom of the Hotel Intercon Manila.

Secretary Michael T. Defensor has been invited to induct the new Creba board of directors and committee chairs. The induction ceremonies will be followed by re-elected national president Pedro Tario giving his inaugural speech.

"As we begin a new chapter in our Chamber's history in our continuing struggle for reforms in the industry, we say our prayer of thanksgiving for all the blessings we received and the lessons we have learned from the past year. We aim to continue from where we have left, hopeful to cover as much ground in attaining our objectives, with the aid and guidance of our Creator", shares Pedro Tario.

As in previous induction ceremonies, heads of various housing agencies are expected to grace the event.

Thrusts

Last year we restructured our organizational setup to set apart the policymaking body from the executive body in order to effect a balance of decision process between the two bodies and to give more members the opportunity to serve in the management of Creba affairs. We plan to institutionalize this setup during the year.

For the information of our members, we have listed down the thrusts of the various Creba committees as follows.

Internal Affairs

1) Update membership orientation handbook
2) Undertake activities aimed at assimilating new members into the Chamber
3) Update and maintain a system of communication

Finance

1) Pursue an improved collection program
2) Serve as clearing house for all fund-raising activities of CREBA, Inc. & its subsidiaries

External Affairs

1) To reach out to other associations in allied industries to explore areas of cooperation and collaboration
2) To participate in the activities and programs of said other associations and encourage them to reciprocate by supporting CREBA Inc.'s programs and advocacies
3) To organize a pool of qualified professionals and developers who can provide advice on real estate investments to local and foreign investors

Chapter Affairs

1) To continue strengthening the chapters to enable them to actively and effectively participate in land use planning and zoning within their respective areas of operation as well as in development councils (municipal or city, provincial and regional
2) To organize the regional offices and enable them to actively and effectively participate in the government's super regions

Public Affairs

1) To establish a level of relationship with tri-media wherein real estate, through CREBA, Inc., is a regular item in news and current affairs. For this purpose, media kits should be prepared and provided to media.

Research and Academe

1) To pursue the BS REM ladderized program
2) To register, organize, and operationalize the Creba Research Institute
3) To strengthen relationship with foreign embassies and consulates as well as overseas associations
4) To ensure that the Creba subsidiaries continue to function as implementing arms of CREBA, Inc., consistent with the latter's plans, programs and policies.

Systems and Technology

1) To organize and accredit systems and technologies for endorsement to project proponents
2) To organize technology forum to encourage sharing of technologies

As President Tario sums it all up, Creba's thrust this year is to continue to be pro-active in taking on opportunities and become an instrument of economic development across all regions in the country.

"The real estate industry is on the upswing and we want to be well prepared to take on the opportunity. We feel that with the present situation - red tape, corruption, cartelized cement industry – full upswing might not be attained. Creba is sure to put up a good fight to ensure that the barriers to our industry's growth will be at least minimized", Tario says.

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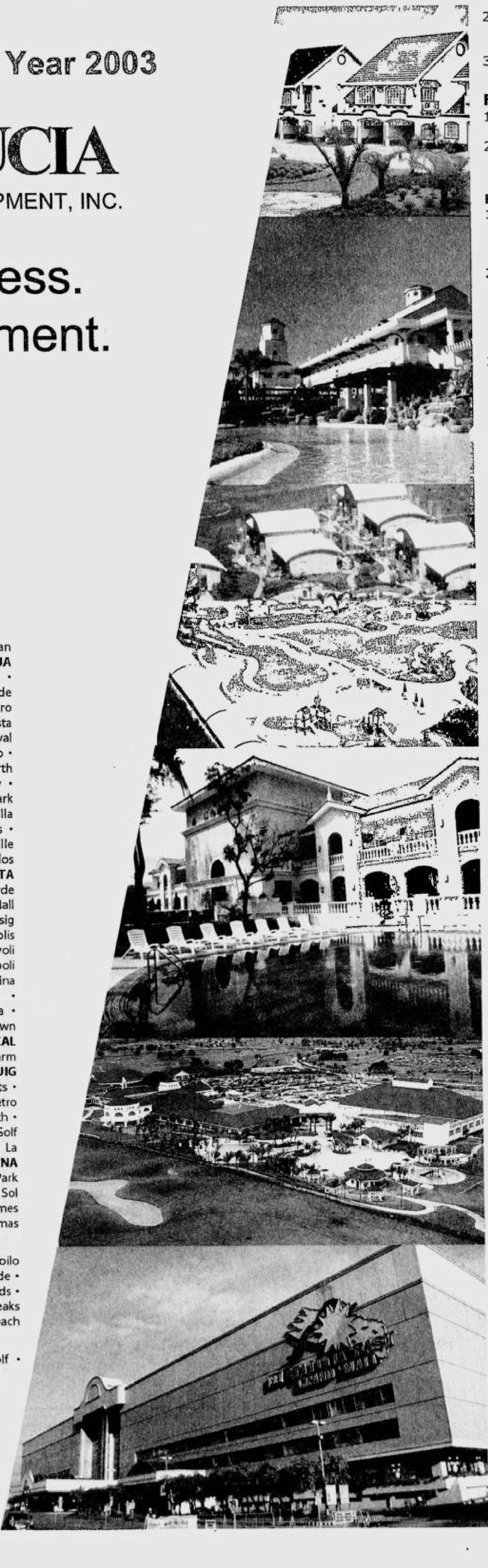


MESSAGES

MALACAÑAN PALACE
Republic of the Philippines

Warmest felicitations to the Chamber of Real Estate and Builders' Associations, Inc. (CREBA) as you hold your 34th Induction Ceremony.

As a major player in our country's housing and real estate industry, CREBA has long been a driving force of Philippine economy. I laud your indefatigable efforts to advance the industry while serving the best interests of your members.

I wish the success of your new set of officers as you implement your plans, programs and development goals that are attuned to the demands and challenges of today's highly-competitive world.

May you continue to be an active partner of the government in our economic transformation, particularly in providing decent homes for our people. Let us work together to beat the odds and improve the lives of all Filipinos.

Congratulations to your new set of officers and *Mabuhay tayong lahat!*

GLORIA MACAPAGAL ARROYO
President

HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT COORDINATING COUNCIL
Makati City

My most fervent greetings and congratulations to the Chamber of Real Estate and Builders' Associations, Inc. (CREBA) on the occasion of its 34th Induction Ceremony. I especially want to congratulate the new set of officers who will now lead this eminent organization of important players in the housing and real estate industry. CREBA has always been able to choose very good people to be its leaders, and I am confident that this year's batch will be no different.

I hope that this year, the government housing sector can count on CREBA to give us an even stronger support and better collaboration. We have made significant progress in recent years, and I firmly believe that, working together, we can make even greater improvements in the country's housing situation. So let us reinforce our proven partnership, especially where your organization's philosophy concurs with government policy-focus on the poor, greater private sector participation, greater access to land, and better coordination among all stakeholders.

The entire Filipino nation stands to reap immense benefits from the positive developments in shelter. I think we have already laid a very good foundation. It is up to us, working as a solid and efficient team, to build upon this a robust structure that will fulfill not just every Filipino's dream of having a home, but our collective aspiration of being a strong and prosperous nation.

Mabuhay!

VICE PRESIDENT NOLI DE CASTRO
Chairman, HUDCC

SENATE
Republic of the Philippines

Warmest greetings to the Chamber of Real Estate and Builders' Associations, Inc. (CREBA) on the occasion of its 34th Induction Ceremony on February 22, 2007.

Since its founding in 1973, CREBA has constantly delivered a continuous flow of services in the housing sector while keeping the public aware of the vital nature of the industry. It is comforting to know that through the years, CREBA provides a wide portfolio of services, from up-to-date information on building trends, to a year-round schedule of networking and business development opportunities, to an aggressive advocacy program on behalf of its 4,500 members.

Because it is public knowledge how successful CREBA is in running its operations for so many years, it is my hope that each member stays current with the latest technology, products and techniques for reducing operating costs and making home building more efficient for the benefit of our people.

As the premier umbrella organization of the real estate industry, I have no doubt that CREBA will remain faithful to its crucial role in promoting the housing industry and become an effective partner of government in nation-building.

Mabuhay and more power to you!

MANNY VILLAR
Senate President

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

Warmest greetings to the Chamber of Real Estate and Builders' Associations, Inc. (CREBA) as you hold your 34th Induction Ceremony on February 22, 2007.

The housing and real estate industry is an important catalyst in pump-priming the economy. I salute the CREBA for its long-standing commitment to be an active government partner in establishing a vibrant real estate industry as well as a viable and sustainable housing program within reach by building better residential, commercial and industrial infrastructure.

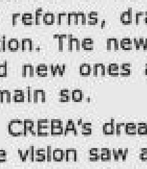
I trust that your leaders shall continue pushing CREBA to greater heights as you formulate solutions to the many challenges confronting housing development for the greater number of our countrymen.

For our part, we in the House of Representatives passed the first trillion-peso Philippine national budget as early as October 2006 crafted to reflect our priorities to improve public education, expand government services and build infrastructure for economic growth and competitiveness.

Let us continue working together for our common vision of a progressive country and a decent home for every Filipino family.

Mabuhay!

JOSE DE VENECIA, JR.
Speaker



CREBA

CHAMBER OF REAL ESTATE AND BUILDERS' ASSOCIATIONS, INC.

Decent shelters can empower a nation. This is one truth that keeps CREBA united and steadfast for the sake of the present and future generations. Yet another truth that has dawned to us for the past years is that helping the government resolve the housing problem has become a long and arduous struggle for CREBA.

And so, while it can take pride in what it has done for three decades, CREBA continues to train its attention on the challenges of the real estate industry, pushing for reforms, drawing up proposals and mustering might to galvanize plans into action. The new administration of CREBA is faced with the challenges of the past and new ones as well. Facing challenges has been CREBA's cup of tea and will remain so.

CREBA's dream is to see the dawning of the age of shelter security for all Filipinos. The vision saw a ray of light thirty years ago. It has been an uphill battle for CREBA, yet it remains undaunted in pursuing cooperative, creative and viable endeavors to make it easier for every Filipino family to own a home.

PEDRO C. TARIO
National President

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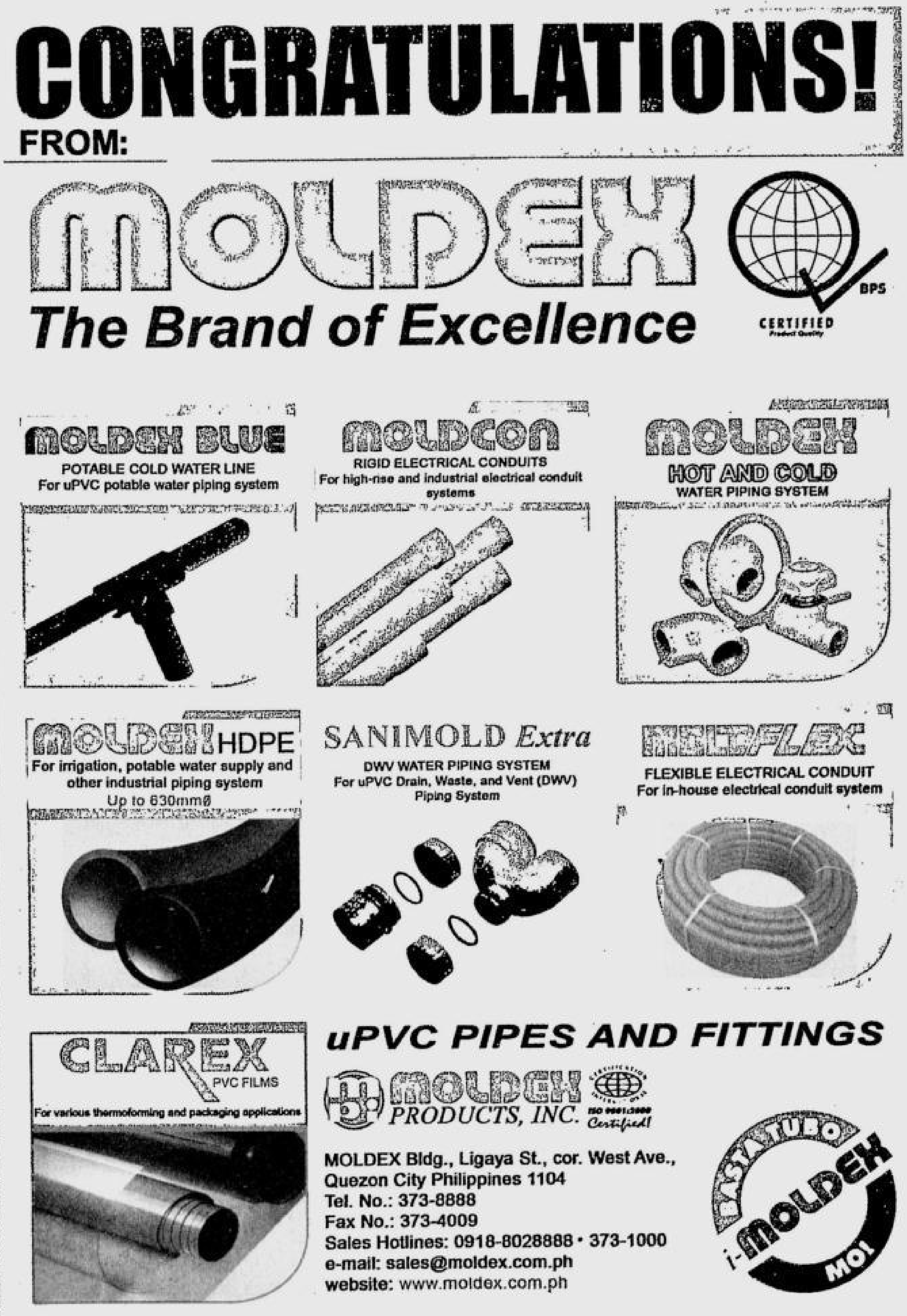

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Pag-IBIG Fund extends funding support for the Deca Homes Projects

Vice President Noli "Kabayan" de Castro, concurrent Chairman of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) witnesses the signing of the Funding Commitment Line (FCL) between the Pag-IBIG Fund and 8990 Housing Development Corp. (HDC) for its Deca Homes Projects located in Mactan, Minglanilla, Cebu, Danao and Davao Cities. Under the FCL, the Pag-IBIG Fund commits to provide funding support amounting to P638.7 million for the said Deca Homes Projects covering 1,070 housing units. To date, this is the biggest FCL the Pag-IBIG Fund has extended to a single corporation. Deca Homes is a low cost subdivision of two-storey townhouse with average lot size of 38 sq.m. and floor area of 46 sq.m. Its selling price is P698,000.00 for a house & lot package. The target beneficiaries are Pag-IBIG members with average monthly income of not less than P15,000.00/month.

CREBA business meet, 2007 induction

AGRICULTURE SECRETARY ARTHUR G. Yap will be the guest of honor and speaker at the 2nd monthly business meeting of the Chamber of Real Estate and Builders Associations (CREBA) in the evening of Feb. 22 at the Hotel Intercontinental Grandballroom in Makati City.

ARTHUR YAP

MIKE DEFENSOR

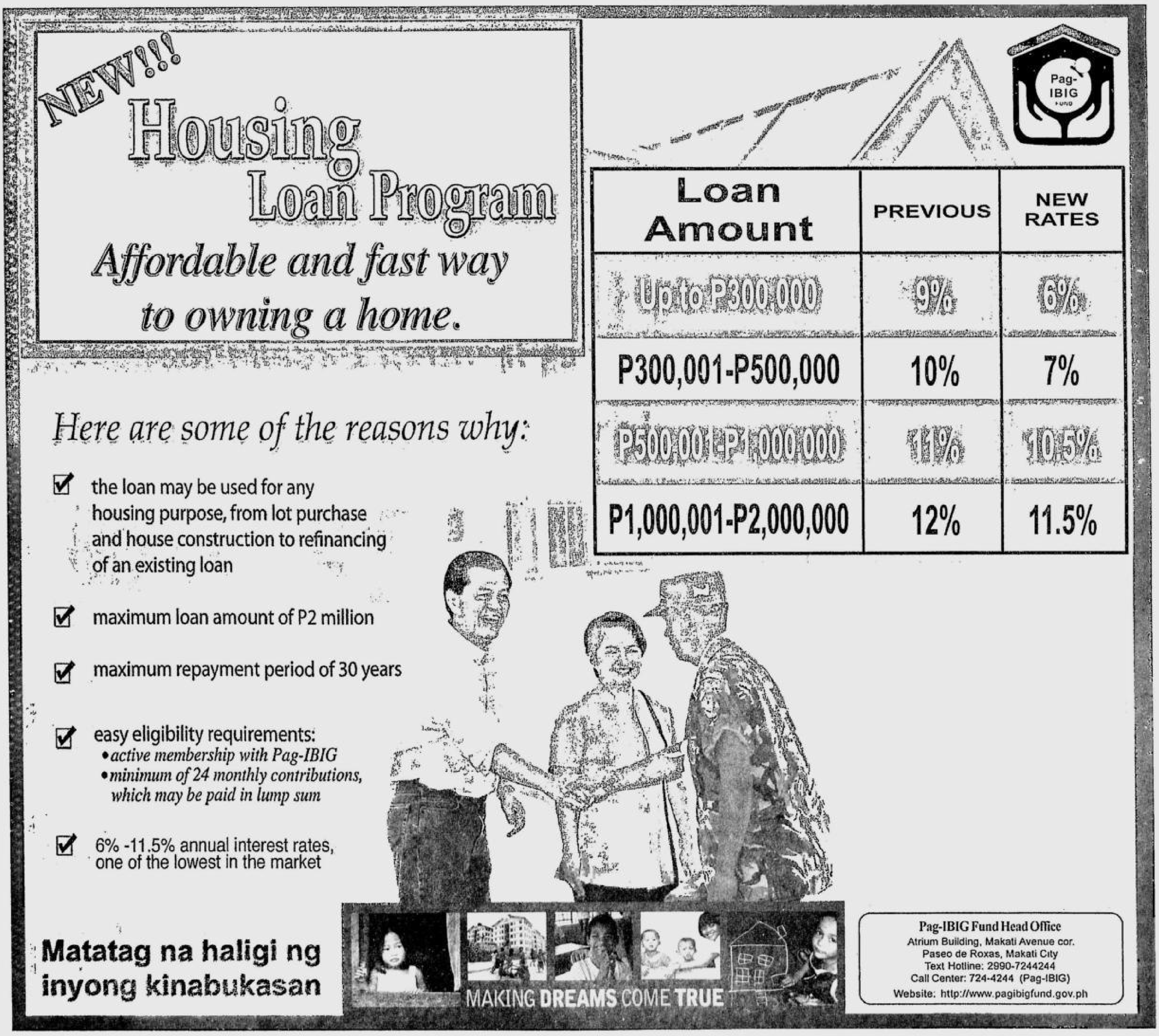
Yap is the presidential adviser on job creation, director-general of the Presidential Management Staff, and the developer champion for the North Luzon Agribusiness Quadrangle and formerly head of the Philippine International Trading Corporation and administrator of the National Food Authority. Yap earned A.B. honors degree in management and economics, Ateneo de Manila University, and juris doctor at its School of Law, and finished elementary and high school as honor student at Xavier School.

Michael T. Defensor, former Chair, Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) and presidential chief of staff, now senatorial candidate, will induct the 2007 CREBA officers and board directors on the same occasion.

Defensor was elected congressman for Quezon City third district in 1995, reelected in 1998 and chosen as assistant minority leader. He was chosen one of the top legislators by organizations and publications. He finished high school, bachelor of arts in history, and master's degree in public administration at the University of the Philippines.

CREBA was established in the early 1973, or 34 years ago, as an umbrella organization of some 3,000 players and professionals in the housing and real estate industry with 30 chapters nationwide and affiliates abroad. Atty. Manuel M. Serrano, CREBA's incumbent board chairman, founded the organization together with the industry's top leaders.

To be inducted are board chair Serrano, national president Pedro C. Tario, executive vice president Techie P. Bautista, treasurer Teresita C. Millan, Directors Rosemarie C. Basa, Dr. Jaime A. Cura, Renato P. Dragon, Oscar A. Inocentes, Victor H. Manarang, Nestor S. Mangio, Jerry M. Navarrete, Enrique O. Olonan, Benson L. Perelonia and Rodolfo L. Pua; VP-external affairs Arsenio M. De Guzman, Jr., VP- internal affairs Avelina P. Acuña, VP-finance Domingo D. De Vera, VP-chapter affairs Eugene C. Yu, VP-public affairs Editha L. Manansala, VP-systems/technology Domingo H. Yap; Presidential Adviser and Council of Leaders chair Florentino S. Dulalia Jr., auditor Imelda S. Sangalang, Academe over-all program director Roque A. Magno, CREBA Institute executive director Emelina P. Talaue, CREBA International Foundation Inc (CIFI) president Purita R. Soliven, and CREBA Social Housing Foundation Inc (CSHFI) president Roberto A. Alvarez Jr.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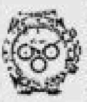

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NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

Please take notice that CLARK DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION willl be conducting a public hearing on **March 1, 2007, 10:00 a.m. OTSG Board Room, Building 2125, E. Quirino St., CSEZ, Pampanga**, in connection with the following Petitions filed by Clark International Airport Corporation.

1. Imposition of Security Fee of Php100.00 to all international passengers departing from the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport (DMIA); and
2. Increase in DMIA Terminal Fee for Domestic Travelers from Php100.00 to Php150.00.

The Public is hereby invited to participate in the said hearing.

09 February 2007, CSEZ, Pampanga

(Sgd.) **LIBERATO P. LAUS**
President and CEO

(PDI - Feb. 15 & 22, 2007)

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, LOCAL GOVERNANCE, AGRI-BUSINESS, EDUCATION, COMMUNICATIONS, REINTEGRATION OF EX-COMBATANTS AND PROJECT ADMINISTRATION EXPERTS

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Minimum Qualifications:

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- Five years of relevant experience in the Philippines or Southeast Asia. Experience in Mindanao preferred.
- Strong written and verbal communication skills in English and Filipino.

Project administration candidates are also sought to support project technical activities. Experience in the following fields is desired: operations management, communications, monitoring and evaluation, training, finance and accounting, grants management, procurement and information technology.

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- USAID related procurement and contracting experience preferred.
- Five years of relevant experience in the Philippines or Southeast Asia.
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Invitation to Bid for the Provision of Multi-Point Videoconferencing Bridge and Gateway

(RP No. 07-7191)

1. The Asian Development Bank (ADB), a multilateral development finance institution headquartered in Manila, Philippines, wishes to receive bids from prospective bidders for the provision of Multi-Point Videoconferencing Bridge and Gateway.
2. Bid documents can be obtained from Procurement and Contracting Unit, Institutional Services Division, Office of Administrative Services (OAIS-PC), Room 1636 South, at the above address, from **22 to 28 February 2007** from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. For inquiries, you may contact Edwin Montevirgen at the above telephone/fax numbers or e-mail address.
3. Your proposal in a sealed envelope should reach ADB by 2:00pm of **15 March 2007** by hand carry, courier or airmail to the following address: Head, Procurement and Contracting Unit, Institutional Services Division, Office of Administrative Services, Asian Development Bank, 6 ADB Avenue, Mandaluyong City, Metro Manila, Philippines.

   The envelope should be marked "***Sealed bid for Provision of Multi-Point Videoconferencing Bridge and Gateway (RP No. 07-7191), do not open before 2:30pm of 15 March 2007***".
4. The bidder should submit a Bid Security in the amount of Php245,000, valid for sixty (60) calendar days beyond the bid submission date.
5. The successful bidder shall deposit with ADB a Performance Security in the amount of ten percent (10%) of the total PO amount.
6. This invitation does not entail any commitment on the part of ADB, either financial or otherwise. Any cost of preparation of the bid shall be borne solely by the applicant.

CÉCILE L.H.F. GREGORY
Director
Institutional Services Division
Office of Administrative Services

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(PDI–Feb. 22 & 23, 2007)

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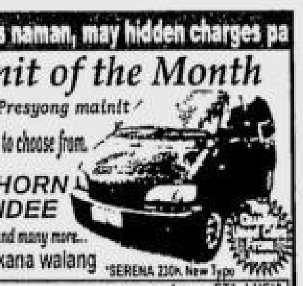

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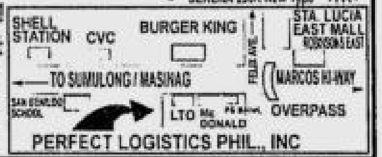

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NOTICE OF FILING OF APPLICATION/S FOR ALIEN EMPLOYMENT PERMIT/S (AEP/S)

Notice is hereby given that the following companies/employers have filed with this Regional Office application/s for Alien Employment Permit/s:

Name and address of Company/Employer	Name of Foreign National	Position
TOPGAMES, INC. Unit-C 8/F Marvin Plaza, Don Chino Roces Ave., Makati City	Kam Fai Au	I.T. Manager
CLUB BOSS KTV & BAR 1506-A M.H. del Pilar St., Brgy. 668 Zone 072, Ermita, Manila	Dong Choul Lee	Marketing and Business Development Manager
NIKIMALL ASIA, INC. 7/F Filipino Building, 135 Dela Rosa Street, Legaspi Village, Makati City	Kaori Waki	Product Development and Marketing Head
SHUN XIN CHINESE DRUGSTORE 1040 Roman St., Binondo, Manila	Quansheng Chen	Consultant
OBAYASHI CORPORATION-CHATHAM HOUSE Room 907 National Life Insurance Bldg., 6762 Ayala Ave., Makati City	Takashi Shimojima	Senior Site Engineer
TURRIS PHIL. INC. 1547 Leon Guinto St., Ermita, Manila	Thomas Bruno Fick	Manager for Export Operations and New Products
HYOPAN LAND PHILIPPINES, INC. 1601-1602 Tower One & Exchange Plaza, Ayala Triangle, Ayala Ave., Makati City	Tae Wook Kang	Vice President
YBM PHILIPPINES LEARNING CENTERS INC. Indo-China Drive, Northgate Cyberzone, Filinvest Corp. City, Alabang, Muntinlupa City	Ho Yong Lee	President
MANABAT SANAGUSTIN & CO., CPAS. 22/F Philamlife Tower, 8787 Paseo De Roxas, Makati City	Yasubumi Matsumoto	Consultant
SKY JOURNEY MANAGEMENT & CONSULTANCY SERVICES INC. 10/F Ramon Magsaysay Bldg., Roxas Blvd., Manila	Jee Hyun Kim (w/o Lee)	Asst. Manager
MATERIALS UNLIMITED CORPORATION 2 Congressional Avenue, Project 6, Quezon City	Yongrui Yan	Project Manager
MATERIALS UNLIMITED CORPORATION 2 Congressional Avenue, Project 6, Quezon City	Nianxin Li	Sales Manager

If you have any information/objection to the abovementioned application/s please communicate with the Regional Director.

LOURDES M. TRASMONTE
Regional Director

(PDI–Feb. 22, 2007)

OBITUARIES

In Loving Remembrance of
"Monching"
DR. RAMON NOEL BORROMEO
who passed away on February 22, 1987.

His wife **Myrna**; children **RJ**, **Trisha** (†), **Mitzi**; grandchild **Sammi**; sisters, brothers & in-laws: **Ging**, **Nenita** (†) & **Benny** (†), **Lolita & Jung**, **Joselito & Ofie**, **Manoling & Lily**, **Luis & Nena** and other relatives request for prayers on the twentieth year of his rebirth to eternal life.

"I waited patiently for the Lord;
He turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me
out of the slimpy pit, out of the mud and mire;
He set my feet on the rock and gave me
a firm place to stand." Psalm 40:1-2

HON. VICENTE GARMA ERICTA

(Former Associate Justice, Supreme Court)
Passed away on February 18, 2007
at the age of 92.

His wife – **Lucena Dancel-Ericta**; children – **Marcelo** (†) & **Carmelita**, **Alexis**, **Hazel**, **Luz**, **Roland & Lily**, **Yolanda & Antonio**, **Sandra & Noel** (†), **Gustavo & Rufina Teresa**, **Brandon & Ma. Victoria**, **Emmanuel & Ernie**, and **Jean**; grandchildren, great-grandchildren and relatives request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the Faith Chapel, Arlington Memorial Chapel, #12 G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Saturday, 24 February 2007 at 10:00 AM in Himlayang Pilipino, Quezon City.

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MAXIMA M. STA. ANA vda. de GALUTERA

who passed away on February 20, 2007
at the age of 86.

Her children, **Pat and Beckie Rosales**, **Ma. Ermi and Efren Madulid**, **Cipriano Jr. and Sylvia Mauricio**, **Macarius and Georgiana Sabile**, **Crisanto and Paulino**; grandchildren **Ali**, **Raphael**, **Patricia**, **Michael**, **Melanie**, **Efren Jr.**, **Rinalyn**, **Cheska**, **Catherine**, **John Macarius**, **Anna Rose and Gregorius**; great-grandchildren, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal rest of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at the Arlington Chapels, C. Raymundo Ave., Pasig City.

Interment will be on Sunday, February 25, 2007 after the 3:00 p.m. Mass at the Pasig Catholic Cemetery.

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Gov't to earmark more funds for pump-priming projects

₱528B for infra development in next three years

By Michelle V. Remo

THE ARROYO ADMINISTRATION said it would aggressively implement its plan to pump-prime the economy by earmarking P528 billion in additional funds for infrastructure development in the next three years.

This will be on top of the P1.7 billion estimated infrastructure spending over the next three years which, however, was inclusive of some private sector investments.

Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya Jr. said the amount would come from the expected "fiscal space" or savings from 2007 to 2010. Fiscal space, he explained, was the difference between the programmed budget for a year and the emerging estimates on expenditure requirements at current prices.

Andaya said the expected expenditure requirements until 2010 would be much lower than the programmed budget due mainly to the lower-than-expected inflation and interest rates, and the strengthening of the peso. This will result in savings that will give the government the leeway to engage in pump-priming activities.

Based on the multi-year budgeting program of the Department of Budget and Management for 2007 to 2010, the government would realize P796.2 billion in savings from 2007 to 2010.

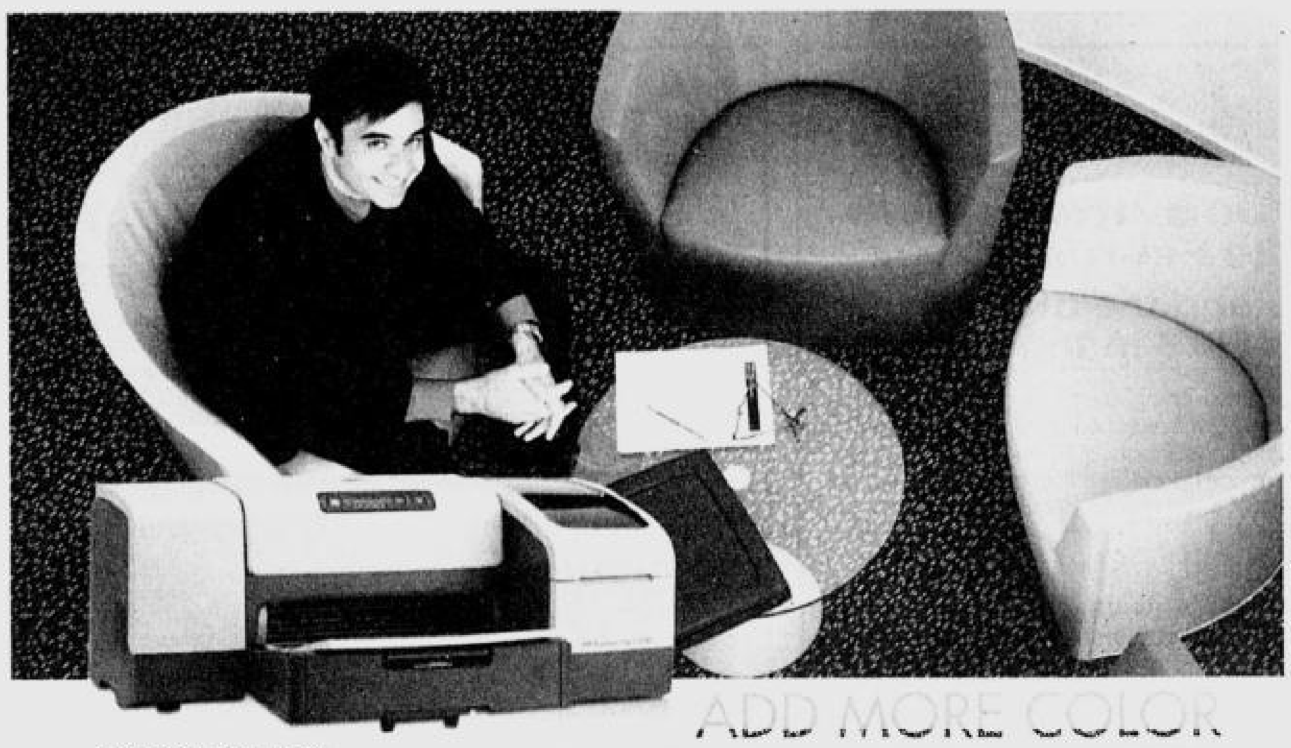
Of the amount, Andaya said, the government was planning to use P527.7 billion for additional infrastructure-related projects. The remainder will be used for other social services projects, particularly on healthcare and education.

"We were prevented last year from spending as much as we intended because of the reenactment of the budget," Andaya said.

Infrastructure development projects that will be pursued include farm-to-market roads, bridges, ports and facilities for roll-on, roll-off projects.

Under the program, the budget for 2007 was set at P1.137 trillion, to be increased to P1.21 trillion for 2008, P1.37 trillion for 2009, and P1.6 trillion for 2010.

Under the latest estimates, the government would spend only P1.09 trillion for this year, P1.088 trillion for 2008, P1.137 trillion for 2009, and P1.19 trillion for 2010 to cover all the intended spending programs, pay salaries of state workers and support government operations.



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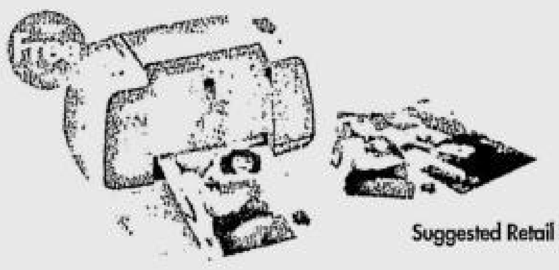

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WTO allows RP to keep restrictions on rice imports

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE FARM SECTOR is given more time to prepare for the opening up of rice market in 2012. INQUIRER PHOTO

THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION has allowed the Philippines to keep its quantitative restrictions on rice imports until 2012, Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap said.

"The (WTO) approval was dated Dec. 27, 2006, but we got it only in mid February," Yap said in an interview.

Negotiations for the QR extension took more than two years as other WTO-member countries had contested it. The country's previous QR on rice expired in June 2005.

To get the extension, Manila had to hold bilateral negotiations with nine-member countries of the WTO, such as the United States, Thailand, Australia, Egypt, Canada, Pakistan, Argentina, India and China.

According to Yap, the extension of the QR will buy the farm sector the time to improve its efficiency and competitiveness before the local rice market is fully liberalized in 2012.

By postponing the liberalization of rice trade, local farmers will continue to enjoy protection from possible influx of cheaper imports that may come from Thailand and Vietnam, the world's two largest rice exporters.

As a developing country, the Philippines is allowed by the WTO to provide the agriculture sector subsidy or support equivalent to 10 percent, or about P85 billion, of the sector's gross value receipts.

However, budgetary constraints have prevented the government from implementing domestic support programs for the rice sector, Yap said.

"It's (the approval of the extension) very timely because it is only now that the government has the political will and the money to boost rice production in the country," he said.

The country is targeting to become self-sufficient in rice in four years.

"If we stick with this program, we will become self-sufficient by 2010," he said.

Yap is referring to a plan by the department to increase rice output by promoting the use of high-yielding hybrid and certified seeds, and rehabilitating irrigation facilities covering close to 250,000 hectares of land planted to palay.

"Funding for repair and rehabilitation of irrigation facilities needs to be constant. That's the fundamental investment we are looking into so we can recover at least 200,000 hectares by 2010," he said.

The four-year irrigation repair plan entails a budgetary requirement of P14.5 billion.

He said that for 2007 alone, the department was targeting to rehabilitate 52,000 hectares of irrigated farmlands. This, alone, would cost P3.1 billion based on a repair cost of P60,000 per hectare.

A major buyer of rice in Asia, the Philippines plans to import up to 1.6 million tons of rice this year.

PCCI sets aside ₱850M for SMEs

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE PHILIPPINE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE and Industry has earmarked P850 million for lending to small and medium enterprises engaged in the Department of Trade and Industry's One Town One Product (Otop) program.

One of the programs of the Arroyo administration, Otop seeks to revitalize countryside growth through entrepreneurial assistance to microbusinesses and small firms.

Carissa C. Evangelista, trade assistant secretary and national Otop program manager, said PCCI made the commitment through a memorandum of agreement with the DTI.

Also, the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry had committed to open up its accredited financing programs to SMEs, especially those with Otop businesses, Evangelista said.

She added that local chambers would also work closely with DTI in finding the best investments suited for a specific locality, and draw up a focused investment facility for each local government unit.

Under the agreement, business owners will also be assisted in gaining access to domestic and foreign investments and markets, she said. The chambers may also offer its facilities for Otop-related activities.

Evangelista said that, aside from the two groups, nine other agencies and organizations were also tapped to support the the Otop through separate MOAs.

These include the Air Transportation Office, Philippine Information Agency, League of Cities of the Philippines, League of Municipalities of the Philippines, National Economic Development Authority, Philippine Small and Medium Business Development Foundation, Philippine Export Confederation, Philippine Center of Entrepreneurship and National Livelihood Support Fund.

The two local government leagues committed to include the Otop program in development programs of their respective towns and cities, including the establishment of Pasalubong Centers.

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Chit Salud has found success keeping stores stocked with both traditional and new food products

Finding joy—and profit—at home

By Linda B. Bolido
Photos by Jim Guiao Punzalan

IN JOURNALISM, A NOSE FOR news, an instinct for knowing what will make an interesting story, is a valued gift.

Conchita "Chit" Cordon Salud has something—more accurately, some things—just as valuable—a nose, an eye and a feel for what will sell.

From the comfort of her home, first in her native Liliw, Laguna and now in Makati, Salud has built up a business that now supplies some of the most popular items, both local and imported, in supermarkets and grocery stores.

Quite appropriately, her line of merchandise is called Homejoy Food Products. Though she simply took over the label from a business started by her husband Faustino "Pong" Salud (he contributed "home") and her late brother Jess Cordon (he added the "joy"), she has kept the commercial venture going for almost four decades now.

She was initially egged on by her husband and guided by her mother's advice: "*Kailangan meron kang pera kasi mahirap humingi sa asawa.*"

Out of the family business

But Salud was not keen on going into her family's own business, slipper-making, an industry Liliw is known for.

She started by sewing ties and, it being the time before disposable diapers, making plastic protectors for kids' panties.

Going into food, the entrepreneur, who trained as a teacher, anchored her distribution business on her province's native delicacy, *uraro*.

The single product was delivered in style—in a Mercedes-Benz, the family car. A vehicular accident that reduced the *uraro* into powder had her diversifying her offering.

Soon *polvoron, mazapan de pili* and *pastillas de pili* she cooked herself were added to her list of goodies. Though she said she did not cook, that did not stop her from trying recipes she found from her readings.

In no time, she was putting her skill as a mathematics major managing a growing business distributing several products, including those from outside Liliw like cookies from Malolos.

Her instinct for knowing what the Filipino consumer will want has made her a pioneer in several fields.

Forward-looking

Years before ready-to-eat meals would become a fact of life for most Filipinos, the forward-looking Salud was already supplying supermarkets and groceries home-made *ukoy*, fruit salad, gelatin, *paksiw na lechon* and cooked *bagoong*.

"*Di pa uso iyan noon*," she recalled. Her children teased her that she was "*amoy biya na*" because she was distributing the dried freshwater fish.

But in pre-microwave Philippines, maintaining the shelf life of her cooked foods was difficult. Products spoiled easily and had to be disposed of unsold, so she dropped that part of the business.

Even as the list of Homejoy distributed food products grew, Salud also dabbled in other money-making ventures. She chuckled at the memory of some of her pioneering and profitable ventures.

"*Sabi nila parang may* Midas touch," she said with amazement about her success.

But food remained the mainstay of her business. From distribution, she branched into restaurant operation with Isla, a seafood restaurant on Pasay Road in the 1980s. She also went into fast food, serving Filipino snacks, years before the current chains opened their first outlets.

Tough business

The restaurant business was tough, however, even for someone as hardworking as

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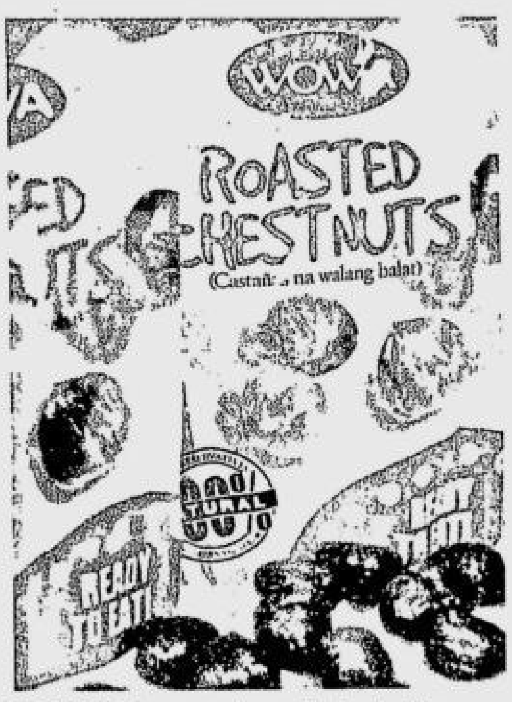

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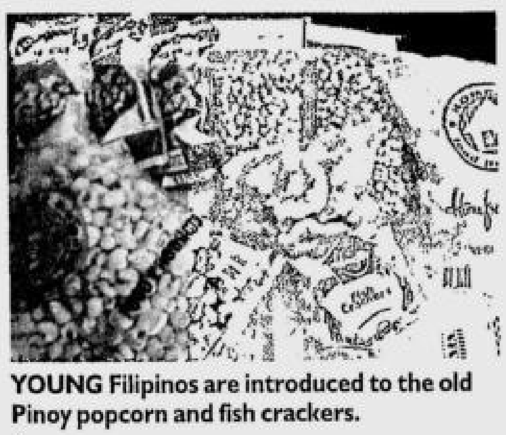

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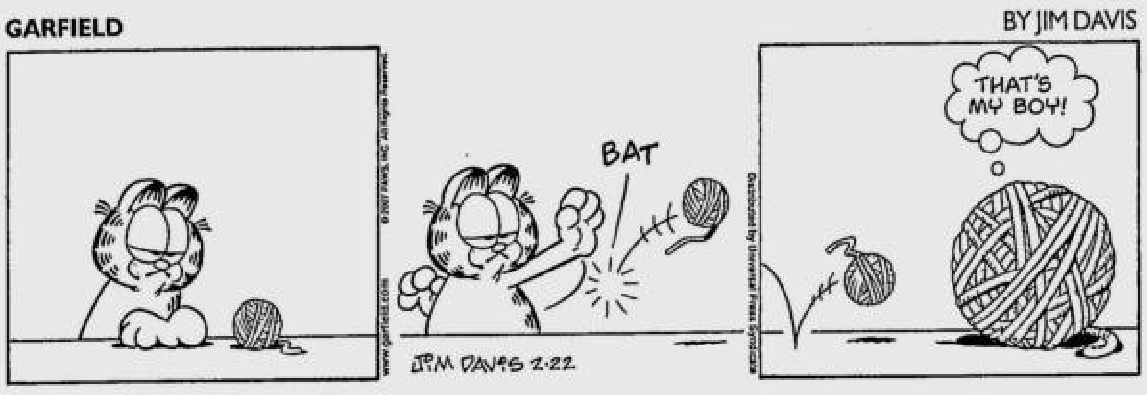
MEGAMALL: Bianca / Mariel 637 75 43 / 0916 247 97 53
PASAY ROAD: Eleanor 887 35 30 / 0915 689 30 88
PASIG: Jihon / Gladys 647 38 16 / 0917 614 37 30
SM NORTH: Jen 926 42 16 / 0905 269 07 17

ComicRelief

e-mail feedback at arts@inquirer.com.ph

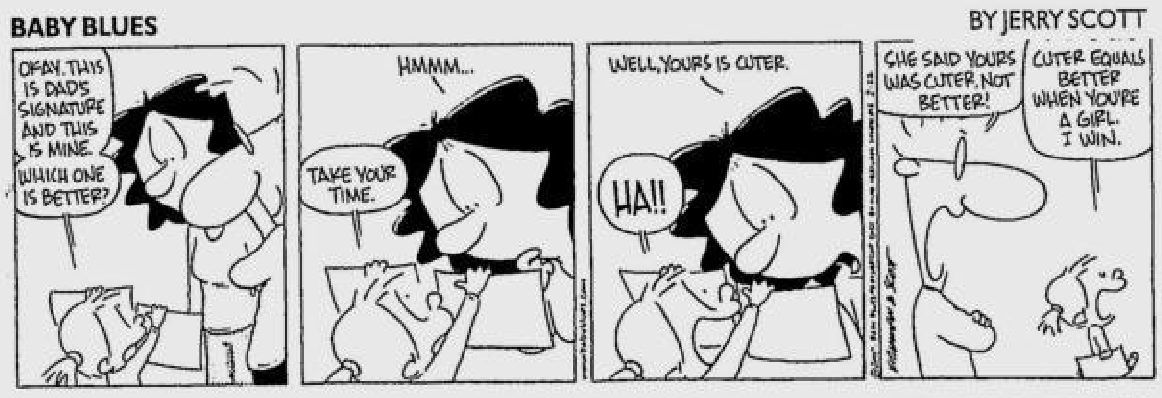
GARFIELD

BY JIM DAVIS


BAT
THAT'S MY BOY!
JIM DAVIS 2-22

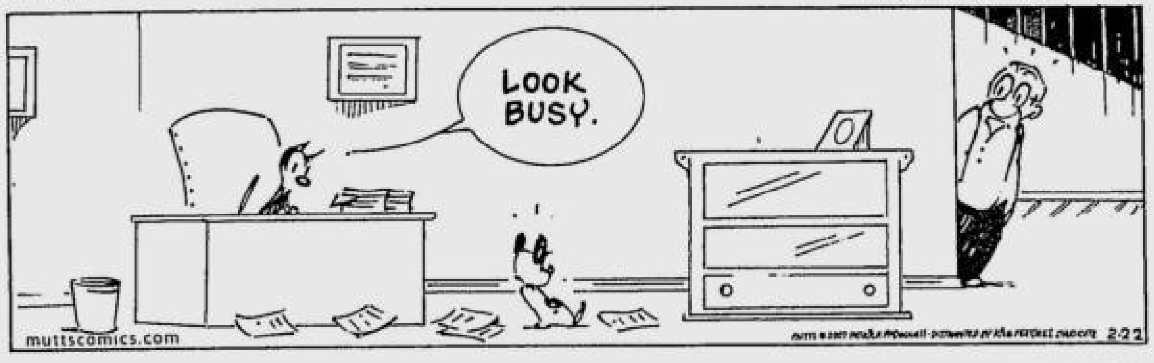
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


OKAY. THIS IS DAD'S SIGNATURE AND THIS IS MINE. WHICH ONE IS BETTER?
HMMM...
TAKE YOUR TIME.
WELL, YOURS IS CUTER.
HA!!
SHE SAID YOURS WAS CUTER, NOT BETTER!
CUTER EQUALS BETTER WHEN YOU'RE A GIRL. I WIN.

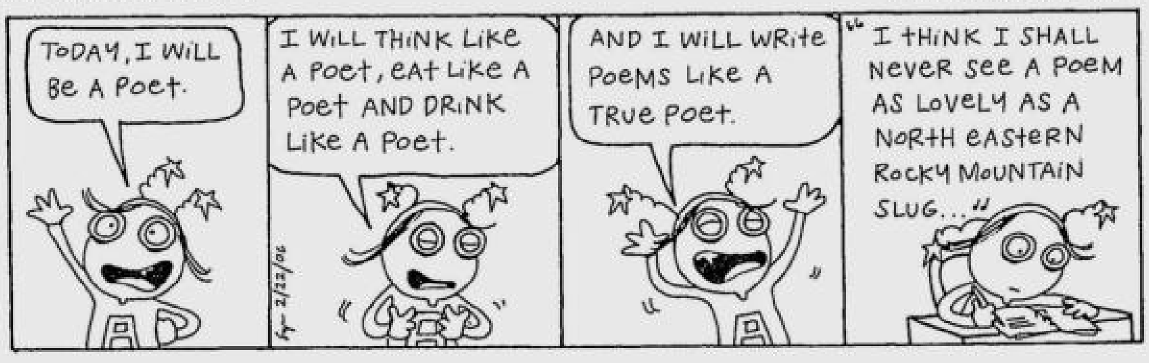
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


LOOK BUSY.
muttscomics.com
2-22

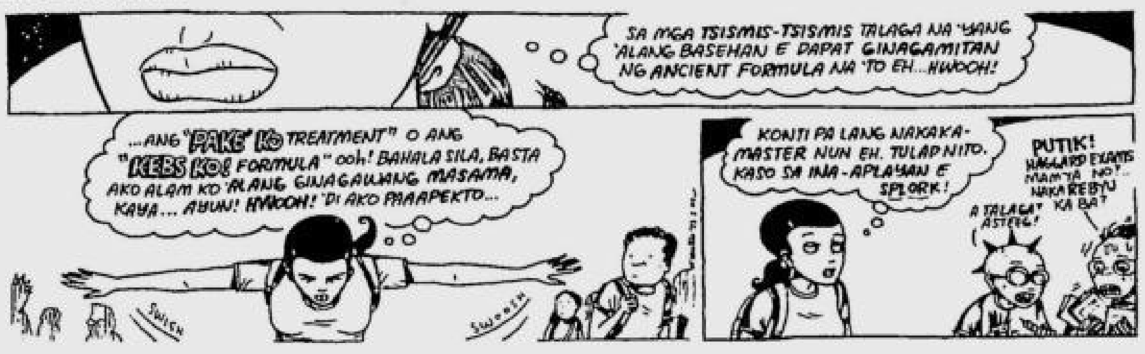
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


TODAY, I WILL BE A POET.
I WILL THINK LIKE A POET, EAT LIKE A POET AND DRINK LIKE A POET.
AND I WILL WRITE POEMS LIKE A TRUE POET.
"I THINK I SHALL NEVER SEE A POEM AS LOVELY AS A NORTH EASTERN ROCKY MOUNTAIN SLUG..."

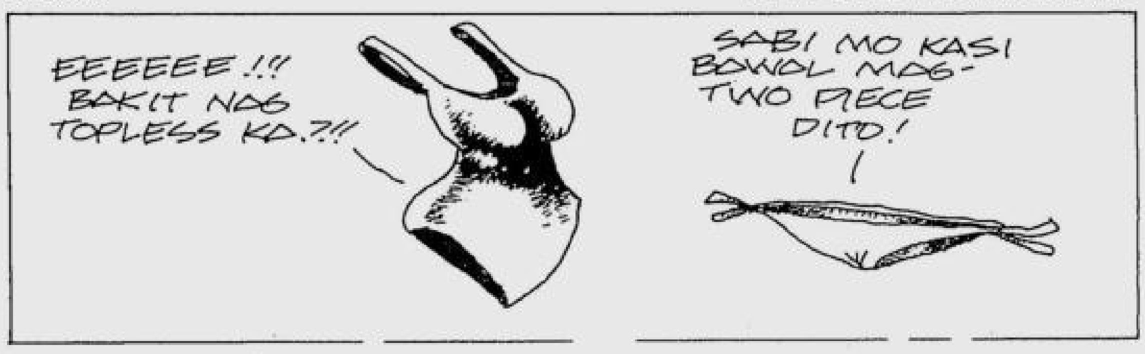
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


SA MGA TSISMIS-TSISMIS TALAGA NA 'YANG 'ALANG BASEHAN E DAPAT GINAGAMITAN NG ANCIENT FORMULA NA 'TO EH...HWOOH!
...ANG "PAKE KO TREATMENT" O ANG "KEBS KO! FORMULA" ooh! BAHALA SILA, BASTA AKO ALAM KO 'ALANG GINAGAWANG MASAMA, KAYA... AYUN! HWOOH! 'DI AKO PAAPEKTO...
SWISH
SWOOSH
KONTI PA LANG NAKAKA-MASTER NUN EH. TULAD NITO. KASO SA INA-APLAYAN E SPLORK!
PUTIK! HALLARD EXAMS MAMYA NO!.. NAKAREBYU KA BA?
A TALAGA? ASTEG!

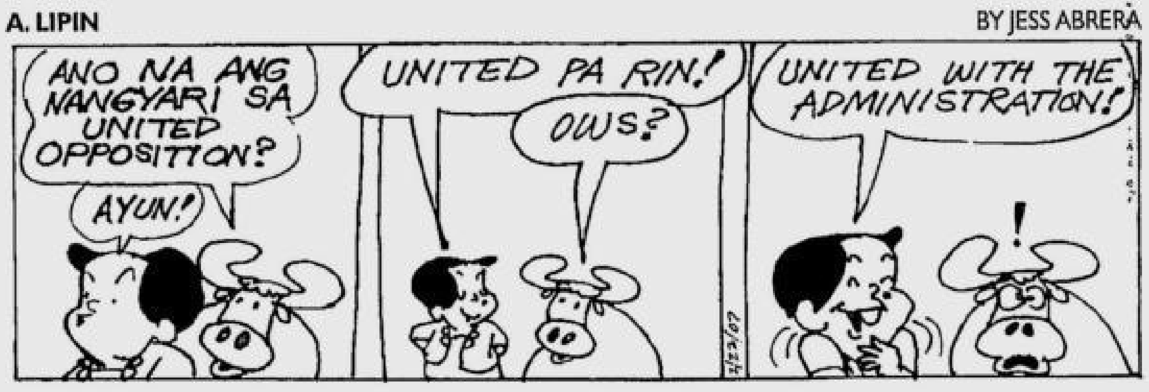
TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


EEEEEE!!! BAKIT NAG TOPLESS KA.?!!
SABI MO KASI BAWAL MAG-TWO PIECE DITO!

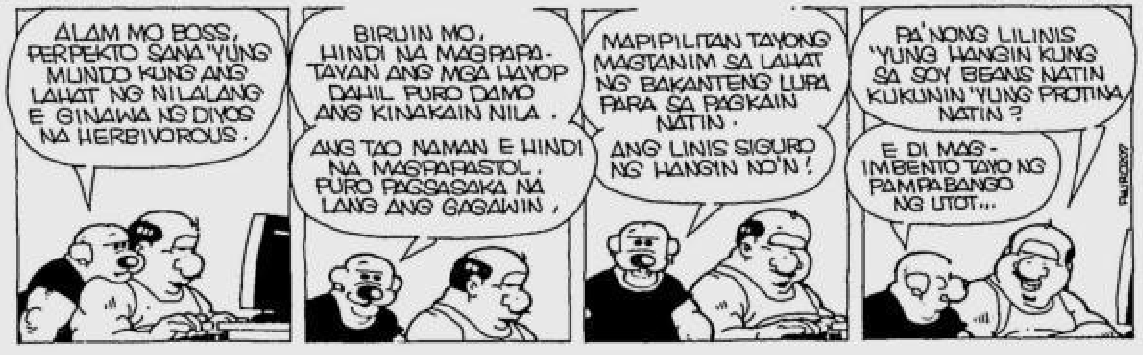
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


ANO NA ANG NANGYARI SA UNITED OPPOSITION?
AYUN!
UNITED PA RIN!
OWS?
UNITED WITH THE ADMINISTRATION!
!

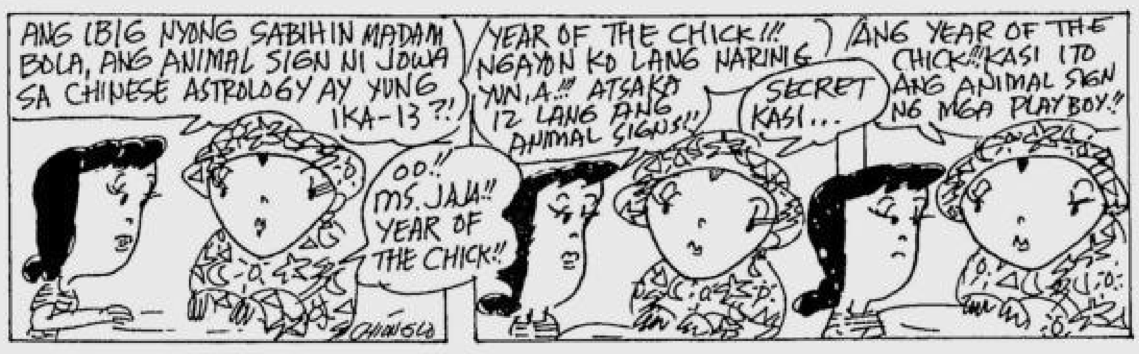
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


ALAM MO BOSS, PERPEKTO SANA 'YUNG MUNDO KUNG ANG LAHAT NG NILALANG E GINAWA NG DIYOS NA HERBIVOROUS.
BIRUIN MO, HINDI NA MAGPAPATAYAN ANG MGA HAYOP DAHIL PURO DAMO ANG KINAKAIN NILA.
ANG TAO NAMAN E HINDI NA MAGPAPASTOL. PURO PAGSASAKA NA LANG ANG GAGAWIN.
MAPIPILITAN TAYONG MAGTANIM SA LAHAT NG BAKANTENG LUPA PARA SA PAGKAIN NATIN.
ANG LINIS SIGURO NG HANGIN NO'N!
PA'NONG LILINIS 'YUNG HANGIN KUNG SA SOY BEANS NATIN KUKUNIN 'YUNG PROTINA NATIN?
E DI MAG-IMBENTO TAYO NG PAMPABANGO NG UTOT...

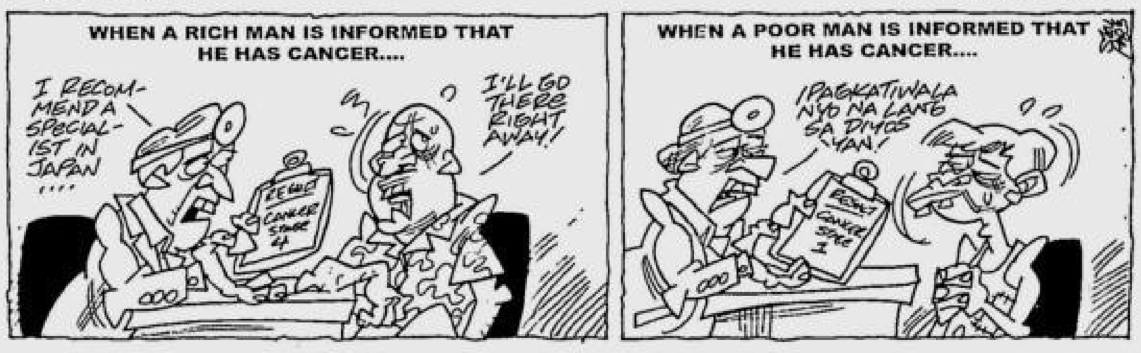
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


ANG IBIG NYONG SABIHIN MADAM BOLA, ANG ANIMAL SIGN NI JOWA SA CHINESE ASTROLOGY AY YUNG IKA-13?!
OO!! MS. JAJA!! YEAR OF THE CHICK!!
YEAR OF THE CHICK!!! NGAYON KO LANG NARINIG YUN, A!!! ATSAKA 12 LANG ANG ANIMAL SIGNS!!
SECRET KASI...
ANG YEAR OF THE CHICK!! KASI ITO ANG ANIMAL SIGN NG MGA PLAYBOY!!
CHIONGLO

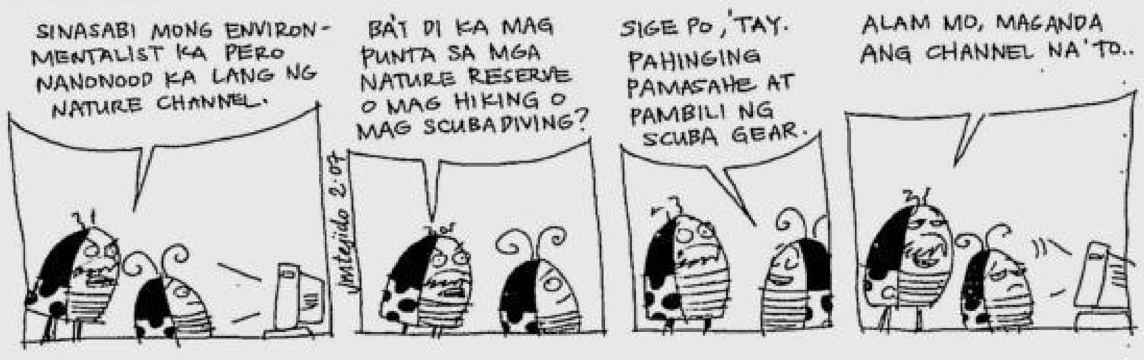
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


WHEN A RICH MAN IS INFORMED THAT HE HAS CANCER....
I RECOMMEND A SPECIALIST IN JAPAN....
I'LL GO THERE RIGHT AWAY!
CANCER STAGE 4
WHEN A POOR MAN IS INFORMED THAT HE HAS CANCER....
IPAGKATIWALA NYO NA LANG SA DIYOS 'YAN!
CANCER STAGE 1

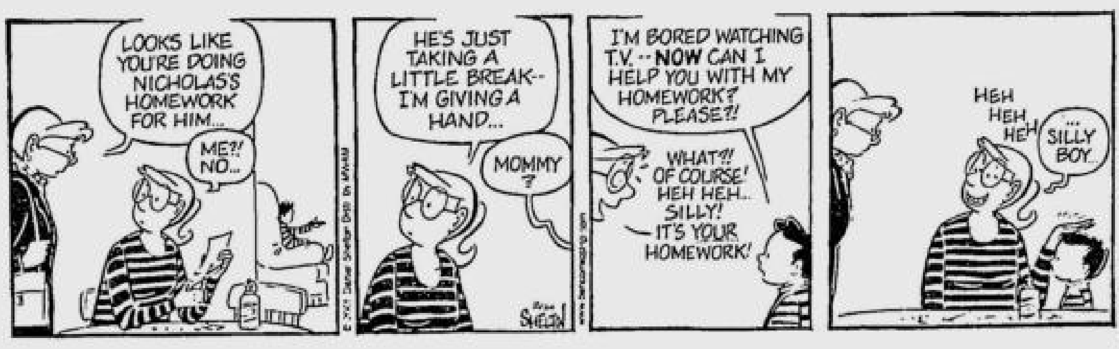
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO

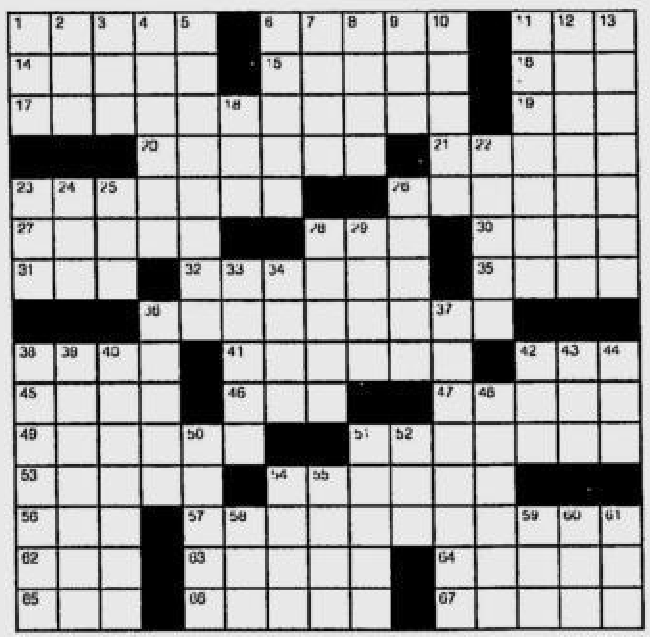

SINASABI MONG ENVIRONMENTALIST KA PERO NANONOOD KA LANG NG NATURE CHANNEL.
BA'T DI KA MAG PUNTA SA MGA NATURE RESERVE O MAG HIKING O MAG SCUBA DIVING?
SIGE PO, 'TAY. PAHINGING PAMASAHE AT PAMBILI NG SCUBA GEAR.
ALAM MO, MAGANDA ANG CHANNEL NA 'TO..
jmtejido 2.07

BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE DOING NICHOLAS'S HOMEWORK FOR HIM...
ME?! NO...
HE'S JUST TAKING A LITTLE BREAK-- I'M GIVING A HAND...
MOMMY?
I'M BORED WATCHING T.V. -- NOW CAN I HELP YOU WITH MY HOMEWORK? PLEASE?!
WHAT?! OF COURSE! HEH HEH.. SILLY! -- IT'S YOUR HOMEWORK!
HEH HEH HEH
... SILLY BOY.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Alan P. Olschwang
Huntington Beach, CA
2/22/07

ACROSS
1 Bea Arthur sitcom
6 Worker's gear
11 TV network
14 Studio stand
15 Mooring basin
16 Drawing on the IRA
17 Start of Evan Esar quip
19 Tony-winner Hagen
20 King Arthur's paradise
21 Adenoidal
23 Establish in office
26 Part 2 of quip
27 Want too much
28 Eminem's Dr.
30 Bad day for Caesar
31 Ostrich's cousin
32 Choice
35 Dispatched
36 Part 3 of quip
38 Epidermal opening
41 Glossy cotton fabric
42 Gallivant
45 Stuntman Knievel
46 Brand IDs
47 Distant ones
49 Part 4 of quip
51 Hammer and Spade
53 Shoe designer Magli
54 Non-violent protests
56 Fall behind
57 End of quip
62 Mama in wool
63 Knight's mail
64 Avoid capture
65 Behold
66 Sierra __
67 Evil spirit

DOWN
1 Shea player
2 Exclamation of satisfaction
3 Function
4 Formalized argument
5 London lift
6 Book name
7 Cognizant of
8 Ken or Lena
9 NASA vehicle
10 Secretarial talent, in brief
11 Holy war
12 Caused to move
13 Most passe
18 Tended tots
22 Faultily
23 Rink flooring
24 __ de plume
25 NBC drama series, "Law & Order: __"
26 On edge
28 Forces
29 Commuted
33 Ski trail with densely packed snow
34 Harnessed group
36 Big-time perp
37 Meant
38 Part of gravel's make-up
39 Frighten into defeat
40 Asylum seeker
42 Obtained
43 Last of a log
44 __ Moines
48 Energetic drive
50 KC player
51 Cubic meter
52 Creative answer?
54 Japanese wrestling
55 Privy to
58 Mined mineral
59 Buzz
60 Tokyo, formerly
61 Game pieces

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

R	A	M	P	■	A	T	R	A	■	T	R	I	M	S
E	L	E	A	■	L	A	I	T	■	R	U	R	A	L
A	L	A	N	■	A	L	T	O	■	A	L	O	H	A
G	E	N	E	T	I	C	A	N	D	P	E	N	A	L
A	G	I	L	E	■	■	■	A	E	S	■	W	Y	O
N	E	E	■	S	T	A	P	L	E	■	M	A	A	M
■	■	■	A	L	O	N	E	■	■	C	O	R	N	S
■	B	I	N	A	R	Y	A	N	D	A	R	E	A	■
M	A	N	N	S	■	■	C	R	I	M	E	■	■	■
A	L	S	O	■	B	E	H	A	V	E	■	O	I	L
M	M	C	■	S	A	R	■	■	■	R	O	N	C	O
M	O	R	S	E	A	N	D	T	R	A	F	F	I	C
A	R	I	E	L	■	I	O	W	A	■	T	I	C	K
L	A	B	E	L	■	E	D	I	T	■	E	L	L	E
S	L	E	D	S	■	S	O	N	E	■	N	E	E	D

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2/22/07

HOROSCOPE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're hardworking, focused and dedicated to whatever projects you embrace. You're unselfish and very idealistic. You believe in service to a greater cause. You have a strict sense of duty. Many of you want to change society or improve it. Expect a lovely, social year ahead. Relationships are favored. Enjoy yourself! Make new friends and contacts.

Birthdate of: Drew Barrymore, actress; Vijay Singh, golfer; George Washington, first US president.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Your powers of concentration are intense today. This is an excellent day for research. If there's something you're looking for, you'll probably find it.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Discussions with old friends or people from the past might be quite direct today. Nevertheless, they will be meaningful and to the point because you believe in what you have to say.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): You'll say what you mean and mean what you say when talking to bosses and parents today. That's because you'll put a lot of yourself into your words.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Avoid religious or political arguments with others. You have strong views right now because you vehemently believe you're right. Just live and let live. (It's easier that way.)

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): When it comes to dividing something or sharing something today, you'll have strong opinions. Fortunately, you're going to do your research and come up with good solutions.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Avoid arguments with partners and close friends. People are hot under the collar today; plus, genuine confusion can cloud your thinking.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You should be aware that you're very forceful with coworkers today. In fact, you might be coming on too strong, which is unusual for you. Relax.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): You're in a playful frame of mind today. Mysteries, whodunits, games and sports definitely appeal to you now. Enjoy clever mental discussions.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Family discussions will be powerful today. There's something you want to say, and today is the day to do it. (Give everyone some food and drink first.)

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Your ability to teach, market, convince, persuade and act is fantastic today. That's because you'll put so much of yourself into whatever you have to say. (Actually, you want to enlighten others about something.)

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): You have strong views about money and possessions today. Just make sure your facts are right. If you feel hesitant about spending money, don't act.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Today, Mercury, the planet of communication, lines up with the Sun, which has to do with your will and determination. This makes you a force to contend with—especially verbally! Don't be afraid to speak up.

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku

by Dave Green

	6	4	2			1	7	
			6					
		7	5			8		
						7	6	3
5	1	3						
		6			8	9		
					1			
	3	2			4	5	8	

Difficulty Level ★★★
2/22

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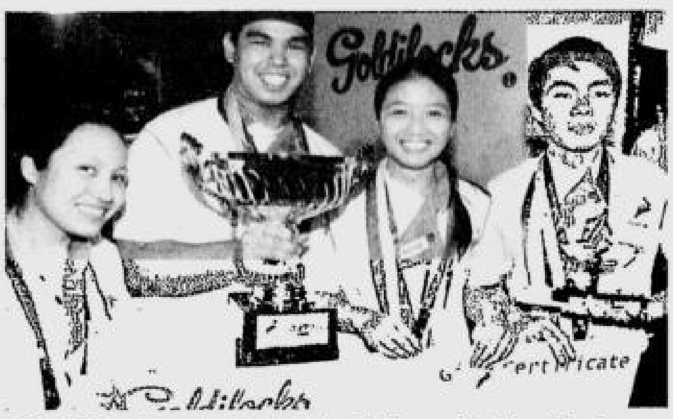
HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

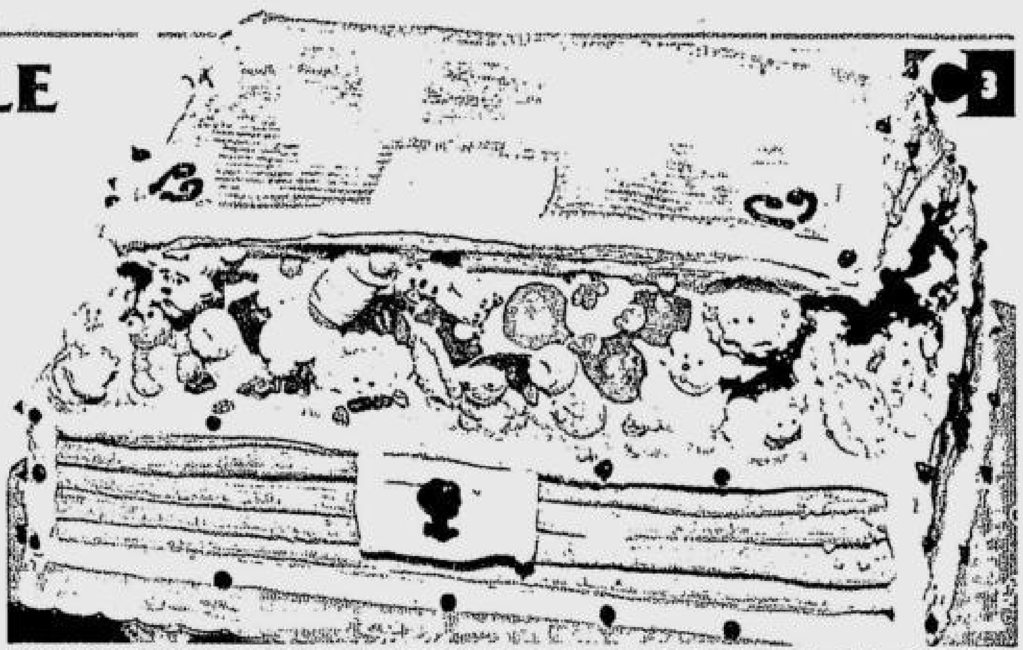
7	2	6	9	3	5	4	8	1
5	1	9	4	8	2	7	3	6
8	4	3	7	6	1	5	2	9
6	9	7	5	1	8	2	4	3
1	3	5	6	2	4	9	7	8
2	8	4	3	9	7	6	1	5
3	5	8	2	4	6	1	9	7
9	6	2	1	7	3	8	5	4
4	7	1	8	5	9	3	6	2

Difficulty Level ★★★
2/21



OVERALL champion De la Salle-College of St. Benilde. From left: Carla Michelle Abad, Myles Sanchez, Maria Jennifer Cosejo and Jerico de Villa

KATHLEEN Caranto, Kathleen Manzo, Shahani Ann Yu and Christine Joy Macalos of St. Scholastica's College were Best in 8" Round Cake Design.



THE TREASURE chest designed by DLSU-CSB was Best 8"x12" Rectangular Cake Design.

Done in 90 minutes

Text by Vangie Baga-Reyes
Photos by Rudy Esperas

IN 90 MINUTES, FOUR STUDENTS OF De la Salle University-College of Saint Benilde (DLSU-CSB) whipped up four festive cakes that earned them P20,000 worth of Goldilocks gift certificates and medals, and a baking showcase of P250,000 plus a trophy for the school.

For the second year in a row, the team of Myles Sanchez, Jerico de Villa, Maria Jennifer Cosejo and Carla Michelle Abad were overall winners in the annual Goldilocks Intercollegiate Cake Decorating Challenge at the Glorietta Activity Center.

DLSU-CSB, which also won the Best in 8" x 12" Rectangular Cake Design and Best in Roll Design categories, had the highest average score in the on-the-spot competition.

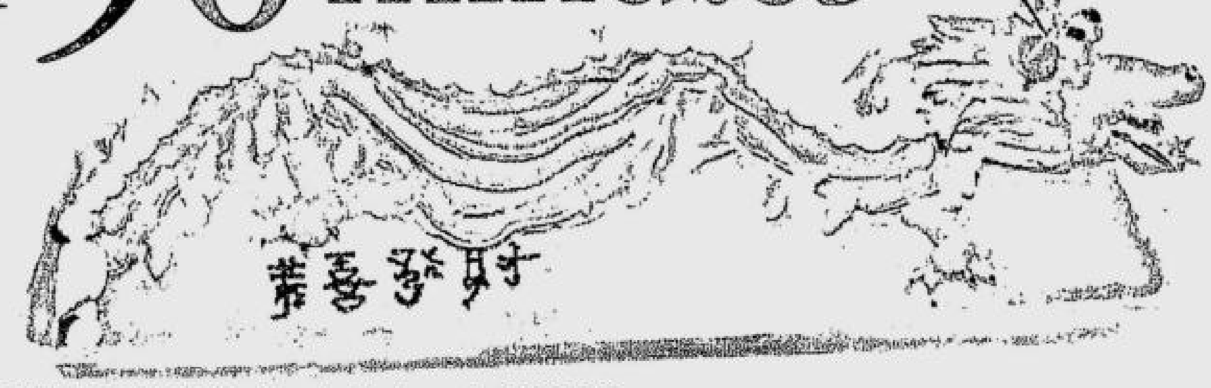
Eight schools vied for top honors. Aside from DLSU-CSB, University of Santo Tomas, De la Salle University-Dasmariñas, St. Anne College Lucena, Inc., OB Montessori, Lyceum of the Philippines, Centro Escolar University Manila, and St. Scholastica's College (SSC) were also represented.

The competition was patterned after the hit television show "Iron Chef." Contestants shared the stage and one central supply bin with decorative materials, such as sprinkles, candies, gum paste flowers, colored piping jelly, toppers, etc. They had to decorate their cakes within a specified period of time.

Teams had one-and-a-half hours to decorate four cakes: a roll, an 8" round, an 8"x12" rectangular and a heart-shaped. Each team had one cake per category.

Large dollops of whipped cream gave the cakes thicker layers of icing. Contestants gave the cakes different colors and added details that "camouflaged" their basic shapes, turning them into a mini castle, a log or a treasure chest, among others. Several opted for floral motifs.

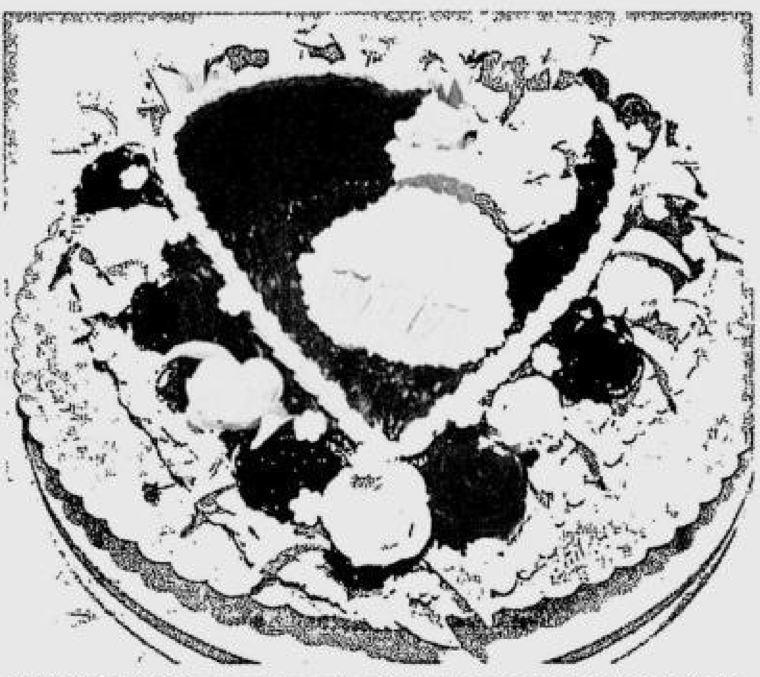
Many of the cakes had everything from candies to sugar flowers. Competitors finished the cakes with chocolate toppings or glazed cherries to fit the occasion.



CHINESE-INSPIRED cake roll with dragon by DLSU-CSB

DAVID Socrates Jr., Flordeliza Medalla, Lorraine Anico and Enrico Sangalang of Lyceum of the Philippines had Best in Heart-Shaped Design.

Contest challenges students to put festive decoration on the spot to four different cakes



HEART-SHAPED chocolate cake with floral accents by Lyceum team

Showcase

The competition, said Pinky Yee, Goldilocks marketing director and head of the board of judges, aimed to give college students a chance to showcase their creativity and talents.

It was a perfect opportunity to present future pastry chefs, as well as provide support to hotel and restaurant or culinary arts training.

Schools in Metro Manila and Central and Southern Luzon that offered hotel and restaurant management or culinary arts in their curricula were invited to participate. They were asked to submit up to three original cake decoration designs. The top eight submissions entered the finals.

A pre-contest briefing and hands-on training for the eight school teams were conducted at the Goldilocks Cake Plant on Shaw Boulevard. Each team was accompanied by an advisor or a teacher.

The visit gave participants the chance to handle the actual equipment to be used on contest day.

Aside from Yee, the judges were Eddy Chan, regional marketing manager for Southeast Asia of the Presto-Avoset Group; Nana Ozaeta, F&B World Magazine and Baking Press Magazine editor-in-chief; movie/television personality Maricel Laxa-Pangilinan, and culinary expert Heny Sison.

Cakes were rated based on creativity, appearance, technique and use of materials. Taste was not a criterion.

During the event, internationally acclaimed cake decorator Dien Tang from Vietnam did an elaborate birthday cake decoration on the spot featuring a cute dog with puppies. Using only Avoset whipped cream, he finished the job in 25 minutes.

Cookie houses assembled and decorated by well-known personalities using Goldilocks DIY (Do-It-Yourself) Cookie Houses were also displayed. Mikee Cojuangco-Jaworski, Gretchen Barretto, Dr. Vicki Belo and her daughter Crystalle Henares, Iza Calzado, Jojo and Butchick Lastimosa, Mariz Ricketts, Donita Rose, Kate Torralba, Gary Valenciano and daughter Kiana, and Tim Yap made cookie houses that were later donated to the children of L.I.F.E. (Leukemic Indigents Fund Endowment).

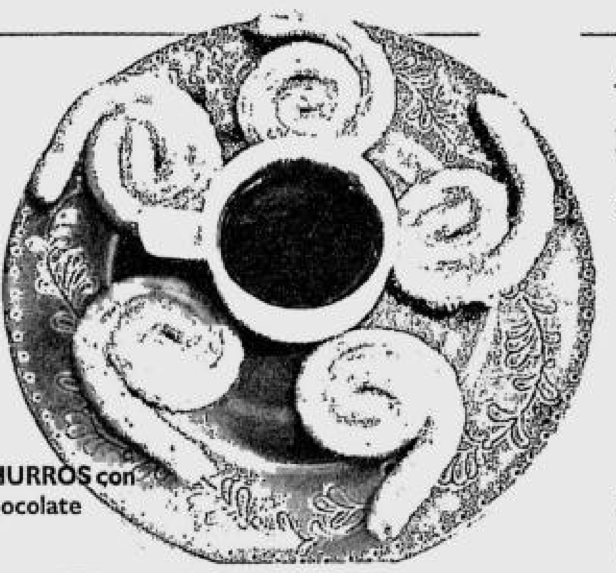
Aside from St. Benilde, other winners were Lyceum, Best in Heart-Shaped Design; and SSC, Best in 8" Round Cake Design.

Winners in each category received P10,000 worth of Goldilocks gift certificates and medals, while their schools got a baking showcase worth P50,000 and a trophy each.

The rest of the participants each received P5,000 worth of Goldilocks gift certificates and baking supplies worth P10,000, and certificates of appreciation for the school.

"Once again, these students have shown that they are really the future of our industry," said Yee. "Speaking for the panel of judges, the level of sophistication and creativity that these cakes displayed went far beyond our expectations."

PINOY flavor *paella* with pork adobo, longanisa, tuyo and danggit



CHURROS con Chocolate

Azul's Filipino and Spanish food are both luxuriously rich and bursting with flavors

Dining by the blue bay

POCHERO Cebuano is a bulalo variation with bamboo shoots, sweet corn, banana, potatoes and cabbage.

WHILE SOME RESTAURANTS avoid any connection to the word "fusion," Azul has actually drawn inspiration from it in coming up with interesting dishes.

The *paella*, which is Spanish in origin, gets a dash of Filipino flavor as the rice dish is made with Pinoy favorites *adobong baboy* and *longganisa*. Called Paella Pinoy, it is made even more flavorful with the addition of *danggit, tuyo* and slices of *itlog na maalat*.

For paella that is extra tangy, there is Binagoong Paella with a mix of *bagoong alamang* and *lechon kawali*. *Paella Sisig,*, on the other hand, is crispy and spicy.

"Azul is actually more Filipino but with Spanish influence," says owner Gia Suarez. "How can you go wrong with Filipino and Spanish food? They're both luxuriously rich and bursting with flavors."

Located on the second floor of SM Mall of Asia facing the Manila Bay, Azul is a cozy family dining place with an extensive bar for people who want to relax in the evening after a hard day in the office. But its Filipino offerings have also drawn *balikbayan*.

FLAVORED Caffe Latte with blue curaçao

PHOTOS BY ROMY HORMILLADA

"Since the mall itself is already a tourist attraction this side of town, our customers with *balikbayan* friends bring them here to get a taste of Azul specials," says Suarez.

Azul specials include Pochero Cebuano, Cebu-style *bulalo* with bamboo shoots, sweet corn, banana, potatoes and cabbage; Cocido, a luscious stew of chicken, pork and beef; and *Sinigang na Hipon*.

AZUL is a cozy family dining place. With an extensive bar, it is also ideal for those who want to relax after a hard day in the office.

But many regular guests go for Crispy Lapu-Lapu, Croquettas with ham and gorgonzola cheese, Grilled Spanish Sausage with white wine, Gambas with chorizo and Salpicao with lots of garlic.

New additions

This month, Azul will add to its menu Lengua, Callos, Quezong Puti sticks and Salmon Sinigang.

And every dish comes with free steamed rice.

GIA Suarez, Azul owner, says, "No matter how good your food is, if service is really bad, people won't come back."

"And it is eat-all-you-can rice," says Suarez.

Of course, Azul's other main attraction, aside from its food, is its location. "Not everybody has this spectacular view of the bay." Suarez is also proud of their service. "No matter how good your food is, if your service is really bad, people won't come back."

Suarez is always faced with the challenge of training staff. "If they don't meet the standard we set, we change them. Then, we train again. I really believe that, in a restaurant, even if the food is mediocre but the service is exceptional people will come back. It's best to have both good food and service."

Good service would mean the staff is not only warm and welcoming, always ready to meet the customers' needs, but also knowledgeable about the food they serve.

Contemporary

Azul's interior, designed by architect Mike Olivares, has a contemporary look. The entrance is simple and subdued, without garish neon signs and colored lights. Only the house's special dishes adorn the glass window.

Inside, wooden tables are paired with well-upholstered leather seats. The concrete walls are done in solid hues of blue creating a rich, vibrant atmosphere for the rather compact space. The color gives the place its name—Azul is Spanish for blue.

The well-designed place also provides an intimate place for meetings and small gatherings.

Azul is not Suarez's first foray into the restaurant business. In 1998 she and her sister opened Bravo restaurant at Festival Mall in Alabang and HV dela Costa, Makati.

In 2002, with a group of friends, she opened Ice Vodka Bar in Greenbelt 3. Ventura has also opened a coffee shop, Perks, beside Azul.

"Azul is really a new concept for me," says Suarez. "Bravo serves authentic Italian. Ice Vodka, (which) offers tapas, is a place where people can hang out. Being at SM mall, we want to target families and make Azul their place." *Vangie Baga-Reyes*

E-mail the author at vbaga@inquirer.com.ph

'Suman': a tapestry of tastes

By Mary Bianca S. Consunji

(Editor's Note: One of six winners in last year's Doreen Gamboa Fernandez Food Writing Awards, this essay was written by Mary Bianca Consunji, a fourth year BA Journalism student of the University of the Philippines and the only student who placed in the competition.)

"BUT WHY DO YOU EAT IT THAT WAY?" a friend asked me, puzzled.

She was referring to the strips of *suman* on my plate, which had been rolled in powdered milk and sugar. Hers, on the other hand, was smeared with a dollop of heavy coconut jam. Still looking at my plate warily, she exclaimed: "That's not the way to enjoy *suman*!"

She ate her words along with the rest of my *suman* five minutes later, after hesitantly sampling the piece I offered her.

Suman, a native cake made primarily of glutinous rice and coconut, is probably one of the most famous *kakanin* in the Philippines. With variants from Nueva Ecija, Pangasinan, Bohol and Ilocos Norte, among other provinces, *suman* can be enjoyed in many different ways: served with sauce, hot chocolate and mangoes, wrapped in banana or coconut leaves, cooked inside bamboo tubes.

And of course, you can roll it in powdered milk and sugar. The beauty of *suman* is that it is a versatile, flexible dish that can be mixed with other flavors, according to taste; fusion restaurants have served it with strawberries and chocolate, while others experiment by with deep-frying it. Of course, there are some who like their *suman* plain, in order to savor the subtle flavor of the sweetened sticky rice.

Although many Filipinos are familiar with *suman latik* because of the ubiquitous *suman* stalls found in the malls, not as many know what the other varieties are, or what they taste like. While all *suman* contain rice and coconut as their main ingredients, some regions add an extra ingredient or two in order to bring their *suman* closer to home, or vary the amount of coconut in the recipe.

For instance, Patupat-Iloko is made from glutinous rice cooked in sugarcane juice, and is often prepared during sugarcane harvest at summertime. during the sugarcane harvest.

In Lanao del Norte, Dodol, their version of *suman* is made with high-quality, purple glutinous rice such as Polotan and Daragadong, and is served during special occasions among the Maranaos. *Suman* sa Ibus from Pangasinan is made with thick coconut milk, and not grated coconut, unlike as what the other recipes call for.

The Moron of Leyte integrates Western ingredients (cocoa, margarine and condensed milk for some versions) with its distinctly native taste and preparation.

Some people also make their *suman* according to their individual taste—Vicky Wallace of the Bohol Bee farm serves her ginger-and-honey-spiked *suman* with mangoes and chocolate made from homemade tablets, reminiscent of Cebu's *puto-maya*.

THE AUTHOR

But a typical recipe for *sumang* Bisaya calls for rice, sugar and coconut, nothing more. Guests who take a short banca ride down the Cambubuhat river in Bohol are invited to eat *suman* made of sweetened brown rice together with sips of fresh *buko* juice while admiring the view.

As for me, I learned to eat my *suman* with milk and sugar because of my grandfather, who made it in the kitchen of our Quezon City home, not in the backyard of a quiet province. However, more often than not, he ate his plain: the milk and sugar mixture (occasionally, with a spoonful of malted chocolate powder) was to accommodate his grandchildren, who were not yet accustomed to the earthy flavors of *kakanin*.

My siblings and I learned to wrap *suman* as early as we learned to eat it. Well, the batches we made usually had loose strips of banana leaves and the pot often had lumps of burnt, sticky rice at the end of the day, but standing side by side with our grandfather—with us carefully dropping each piece of *suman* into the boiling pot—is one of our most cherished memories of him.

Aside from the flavor, the shape of *suman* varies from region to region. In his essay "In Praise of Suman Past," Elmer I. Nocheseda enumerates the different ways various provinces package their *suman*. He says: "In Buting, Pasig the late Ti Onyang Ochoa used to wrap *suman* like a *balisunsong* while my *Lola* Gorya in Pateros wraps it like a rectangle... *'Pag sobrang higpit, puputok; pag sobrang luwag, sasabog*."

Nocheseda continued: "In Zamboanga, they make cones of banana leaves where *suman* is eaten like ice cream. In Cebu, Dumaguete and Glan in Sarangani, the basic *pusu* is intricately woven from fresh coconut leaves... a four-sided, diamond-shaped casing like the heart, or *pusu* of the banana tree."

The author also said William Henry Scott—who wrote several books on Prehispanic Filipinos—found long-forgotten terms to describe the shapes of the wrappers while reading ancient Cebuano dictionaries.

Thus, terms like *binuwaya* (crocodile), *linalaki* (a naughty take on a man's fertility) and *kumol sin dato* (Datu's fist) were rediscovered.

In the Philippines, food is inevitably tied to rituals and festivals; Nocheseda said: "The Yakans in Basilan create the shape of birds for the *suman* wrappers, which they call *tamu*. Together with boiled eggs, they form part of their ritual offering for the important ,rites of Pagtimbang and Paggunting. In Romblon, *suman* is part of their ritual called *mahikaw*. In Pateros, *suman* is used in their *pasubo* ritual for the legendary *buaya* of Sta. Marta fiesta every February and July."

Rituals aside, making and eating *suman* is a ritual in itself: just ask the people who enrich the country's library of flavors by creating their own variants. *Suman*, the *kakanin* that so many regions have adopted as their own, shows the colorful tapestry of Philippine culture with its flavors and shapes as no other delicacy does has.

New choco indulgence

CHOCOLATE with APRICOT, WALNUT and wafer

CHOCOLATE with STRAWBERRY, ALMOND and wafer

THE NEW CADBURY Gold is expected to be a welcome treat to Filipino choco-holics.

It features the finest blend of dark and milk chocolate with the right mix of sweetness and tartness.

Cadbury Gold also has generous amounts of tangy fruits, crunchy oven-roasted nuts and crisp wafer pieces. It is available in strawberry and almond, and apricot and walnut variants.

Cadbury guarantees the new Gold's premium quality, a hallmark of all its products.

Other Cadbury favorites are Fruit & Nut and Dairy Milk.

COOKING CLASSES

Dimsum 'my way'

THE REGGIE ASPIRAS SCHOOL OF CULINARY ARTS will conduct the following classes Feb. 23—Dimsum Done My Way (all new): Har Kow, Sticky Rice Siu Mai, Mini Sausage Siopao, Chinese pancakes, Toffee Bananas; Feb. 24—Steaks (all new): Rock-grilled Spanish Steaks (grilled on the spot) with Aioli, Garlic Oil and Chili Sauce; Croissant Steak Sandwich with condiments; Grilled Bourbon Slab Steaks; Ribbon Steaks Carved on the Spot served with Vegetable Risonni; Feb. 26—Around the World Fondue (all new): Cheese Fondue 3 Ways: Italian Pizza Style, German Style with Sausages, Best Ever Cheese, bonus variation with truffles; beef: Chinese style, My New Take on the Classic Bourguignonne (even more delicious sauces), Brownie Fondue; sides; Feb. 28—Popular American Chinese Dishes (all new): Orange Chicken, Mu Shu Pork, Pork With Lychees, Ginger Beef, Walnut Prawns, Yang Chow, dessert. Call 9289296 and 9273008.

Native treats

The Maya Kitchen is offering the following classes: "Kakanin" (Cassava Cake, Pichi Pichi, Cuchinta, Maja Nangka, Putong Puti, Bibingkang Malagkit and homemade Salabat), 9 a.m.-1 p.m., Feb. 24; "Bartending", 2-6 p.m., Feb. 24 (It covers Basic Tools, Classifications of Wine and Spirits, Types of Bar Glasses and Usage, Mixing, Serving of Popular Cocktail Drinks including Garnishing with wine tasting and snacks); "Basic Culinary," 9 a.m.-2 p.m., Feb. 27-March 2, (Introductory series covers proper hygiene, sanitation and safety; nutrition and nutritional cooking etc.); "Commercial Bakery Business (Advance Bakery Production)", 2-6 p.m., Feb. 27-March 2; "Vegan Cooking and Tai Chi Class", 3-6 p.m., March 3, (cooking demo of Vegetarian Hot Pot, Pochero, Paella and Vegetarian Salmon Steaks with Tai Chi Lesson). Call Maya Kitchen at 8921185 or 8925011 local 108; e-mail mkitchen@ultimate.info.com. ph); visit 8/F, Liberty Building, A. Arnaiz Avenue (formerly Pasay Road), Makati.

Spanish food and wine seminars

The Spanish CHamber of Commerce (La Camara) in partnership with the Embassy of Spain's Economic & Commercial Office and Instituto Cervantes is holding a two-month Spanish wine and gourmet seminar at Casino Español de Manila. In March, food experts Juan Carlos de Terry and Reggie Aspiras will hold a three-Saturday seminar, Introduction to Spanish Cuisine. On March 17 and 24, De Terry will discuss the various cheeses from the different regions of Spain. Aspiras, on March 31, will cook Spanish dishes and discuss the various ingredients used.

Call Instituto Cervantes at 5621482 to 85 local 115, and La Camara at 8867643.

MR. ROCKEFELLER'S interiors create a pleasant ambiance for dining.

Foodie haven

THE HOLIDAYS MAY HAVE COME and gone, but the feasting never ends at Greenbelt.

You can almost feel the Mediterranean sun as you bite into Greece's fine cuisine at Cyma. Start off with delicate little *mezedes* (appetizers) served with a hearty shout of "*opa!*" then on to a full course with the freshest seafood and chicken, the choicest cuts of beef, pork and lamb, and perfectly seasoned vegetables.

The homemade Gyros and Souvlaki (Greek shish-kabobs) are perennial bestsellers. Likewise, the national dish, Moussaka, is a meaty experience that will have you dancing like Zorba the Greek.

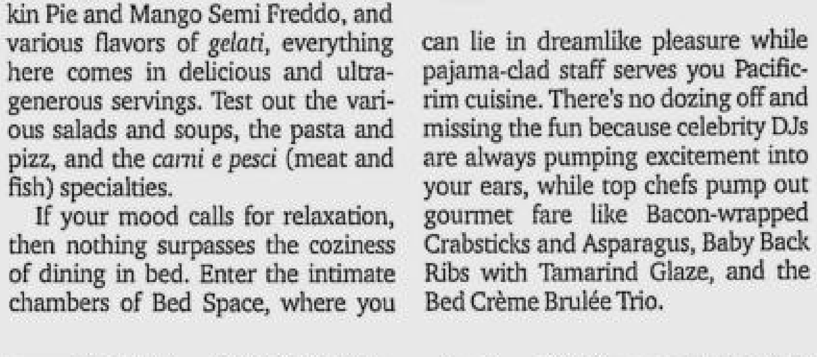
Mr. Rockefeller, meanwhile, is the place to go for steaks, ribs and spanking good oysters. Oysters Casino with bacon and shallots, Oysters Blue with blue cheese, Oysters Pizza Olé—there are more than a dozen ways to enjoy these jewels on the half-shell at Mr. Rockefeller, but you've got to leave space for the baby back ribs, pork chops, fish and chips, pasta and dessert.

Think Schwarzwalder and scenes of Germany's cozy family inns come to mind. Schwarzwalder enthralls with Deep-Fried Camembert, Tossed Ceasar Salad, Linseneintopf (Lentil Soup), Bacon and Prawn Linguine, vegetarian Risotto Primavera, Blue Marlin Meuniere, as well as Manila's largest sausage selection and some of the most delectable dishes of chicken, beef, pork and lamb.

For 30 years now, Capricciosa has been Japan's most famous chain of Italian restaurants. From antipasti like Escargot in Garlic Butter Sauce and Rice Croquette, Sicilian-style, to sumptuous portions of Capricciosa Pizza, Calzone or Lasagna Capricciosa-style, to rich Homemade Pumpkin Pie and Mango Semi Freddo, and various flavors of *gelati*, everything here comes in delicious and ultra-generous servings. Test out the various salads and soups, the pasta and pizz, and the *carni e pesci* (meat and fish) specialties.

If your mood calls for relaxation, then nothing surpasses the coziness of dining in bed. Enter the intimate chambers of Bed Space, where you can lie in dreamlike pleasure while pajama-clad staff serves you Pacific-rim cuisine. There's no dozing off and missing the fun because celebrity DJs are always pumping excitement into your ears, while top chefs pump out gourmet fare like Bacon-wrapped Crabsticks and Asparagus, Baby Back Ribs with Tamarind Glaze, and the Bed Crème Brulée Trio.

CYMA'S Pastisado—Greek Osso Bucco


CAPRICIOSA'S version of sumptuous, traditional pizza

FROM about 100 items, Homejoy has decided to limit itself to some 40 bestsellers ranging from peeled chestnuts to *tuyo* in olive oil.

Finding joy-and profit-at home

From page C1

Salud. For one thing, Isla's parking lot only had room for three cars.

She added: "*Mahirap ang* restaurant, *mahaba ang araw. Madaling araw mamalengke ka, magsasara ka gabi.*"

After closing the restaurant, she refocused on her food-distribution system. At one point, she said, she had about 100 products.

Now she is down to 40-50, limiting herself only to the bestsellers. The downsizing is most welcome if you ask her husband and their six children and 10 grandchildren because Salud is a colon-cancer survivor.

Under the brand Wowa, her young grandchildren's pronunciation of *lola*, Salud supplies big stores like the SM, Robinsons and Rustans/Shopwise chains, and Landmark.

She has made the peeled chestnut, which she imports in foil packs, a popular snack item. She perseveres in keeping the old-fashioned Filipino popcorn and the almost forgotten twisted cookies (*pilipit*) on store shelves, making them available for the younger generations to discover. It is the same with her bottled sweet *macapuno* balls. If not for entrepreneurs like her, these products would have simply faded away.

Salud's business genius has guided her in making decisions like stopping the importation of certain products that spoil easily and demanding better packaging before re-ordering again.

She is currently enthused about a recent discovery, canned tuna belly from Zamboanga. "I'm not a big tuna fan, " she said, "but when I tasted this, I just had to track the makers down."

She is now awaiting delivery of more cans after selling out the first batch.

And so the search for potential bestsellers continues.

COUNTRY COOKING

Micky Fenix

One fiesta day

MY FIRST FIESTA EXPERIENCE was in my grandmother's Bataan town of Balanga.

Days before the event, my granduncle's house was in a frenzy with the cleaning and the cooking. I was awakened on fiesta day by the marching band.

The band—and it seemed the whole town, too—later came to eat at the house. At least that's what it looked like to my 9-year-old eyes.

That was the time I learned that everyone was welcome, except that friends and family ate upstairs and everyone else ate downstairs.

Later on, I learned of the other division at fiestas. Men drank together in one area and the women chatted in another. Men's stories were always the same, my husband's aunt told me, but they never tired of retelling them.

And sometimes, someone who played the guitar well got together with a good singer and suddenly old songs resonated through the party bringing smiles that spoke of pleasant memories.

In Manila, the Quiapo fiesta is not any different from provincial ones. There are marching bands and houses offer the best dishes of very old Manila such as *pamplina* and *galantina*.

But the procession is more surreal as thousands of people form a mass around the Black Nazarene, almost like a mob, that snakes through the Quiapo district.

Latest fiesta

My latest fiesta experience was in Iloilo, specifically in the district of Jaro. I was asked to go early to avoid the traffic at fiesta time. For someone from Manila, the slow-moving vehicles did not seem like a problem.

All roads that morning led to the Jaro Cathedral for Masses and to pay homage to Our Lady of Candelaria on her feast day. Her image is outside the church, in front, overlooking the town.

That day a long line was leading up to her. For devotees, it was imperative to buy candles. Many were sold at stalls in the color of the year, fuchsia, with the Virgin's image embedded on it.

We made our way through the stalls that were allowed on the street that day. Every few feet, *bibingka* was being cooked, small round pieces made of rice flour and *buko* and cooked on makeshift charcoal ovens.

In between, a rather eclectic mix of food was either being heated or cooked—*siopao*, waffles, *puto*, cotton candy, boiled corn.

After our immersion into the religious fiesta spirit, it was time to take refuge from the noise and heat by repairing to the house of my host that day.

Times have really changed because I noticed that gates to houses were no longer opened wide to receive one and all. Someone was there to ask who your host was and, if you gave the right name, you were ushered in. Of course, old friends of the family didn't need to say the magic word.

At every house, the buffet table was always the center of action. There were chaffing dishes that meant a caterer was in charge of the food. It seems the old way of a community of help coming over to do the cooking is no longer done or possible.

In the past, farm hands brought in not only the produce of the land and livestock in their care but also the whole family to help out.

Varied fare

Fiesta food sometimes can be predictable—*lechon, callos*, steamed fish in soy sauce. But there are enough variations from house to house such as *kare-kare*, lamb *kaldereta, dinuguan*, fish tempura, *lengua, estofado* and lasagna.

What looked like *bringhe* to me was called Valenciana there. That's glutinous rice cooked in turmeric with chicken pieces and some raisins and *chorizo*. Up north in Luzon, Valenciana requires the red coloring of tomato sauce.

LINING UP for some fiesta special

Desserts consisted of old favorites like cathedral windows and fruit salad. For a moment I thought I stepped back into the past when Baked Alaska was offered. Cakes came in many forms—*ube*, mango mousse, black forest, deep dark chocolate.

Sometimes, the caterer's food is supplemented by products from specialists. Crunchy and perfect fresh *lumpiang ubod* and delightful *baye-baye* (pounded *pinipig* with coconut) made me envious that Ilonggos could have them on any day.

But what is a fiesta without the procession? It was to start at 4 p.m. and so, to burn off some of the calories at lunch, we went off to where the queen of the fiesta, Maiki Abello, and her princesses, Marianna Vargas and Erica Abello, with their escorts, were dressing for the long walk.

They were to lead the procession from the church through a predetermined route then back to the church. Following them were students, seminarians, devotees and the *carroza* of Our Lady of Candelaria, which had blue candles as main decor.

A dinner for the queen and her court was scheduled after at Nelly Garden, the town's beautiful grand mansion. Presumably there would be fiesta cooking as well. The coronation was at midnight at the town plaza.

For the rest of the fiesta-goers, their day must have been as long, busy and filling.

Making the mark

Who says Filipino food hasn't made its mark in the world?

In the recent special issue of Saveur, a gastronomy magazine, our cuisine was described as Asia's Soul Food, no. 28 in a list of 100 "favorite foods, restaurants, drinks, people, places and things."

The picture was of *piniritong tanguigue*, described as fried mackerel though we guessed it was fried *hasa-hasa*. The other dishes mentioned were *pancit bihon* and *pinakbet*. The choices made us raise an eyebrow because it reaffirmed our belief that everyday simple cooking was what made a country's cuisine.

We are thrilled because the short write-up said, "... we're fools for Philippine food ... it has an extravagant depth that distinguishes it from other Asian cuisines."

So there!

MAINSTAY at fiestas—*lechon*

AN AMAZING array of street food

THE CONSUMER

Can you bank on them?

By Linda B. Bolido

I HAVE HEARD IT BEFORE AND I heard it again the other day. It seems that, if it is not for the fact that putting money in the bank is safer than keeping it in a sock, many people would rather do the latter.

With the minuscule interest a savings deposit earns and with all the bank charges and restrictions imposed, the general impression seems to be that banks feel clients owe them a favor when they condescend to accept deposits.

I heard about the inconvenience caused by the purchase of one bank by another. I do not know if other consumers have had this problem before but some clients of a medium-size bank that was bought recently by a bigger bank raised some interesting questions.

Their old bank was pretty stable but the owners might have wanted to get out of the banking business. After the bigger bank took over, maintaining balances were increased, among other things.

The differences were quite significant and the changes were effected apparently without notifying clients. Depositors were surprised to find out that their accounts were assessed penalties for falling below the new bank's required maintaining balances.

The situation is particularly unfair to small depositors who may have chosen the smaller bank in the first place precisely because its terms suited their requirements. It may not seem much to people with big accounts but to ordinary wage earners a penalty of P100 is already significant.

Shouldn't both vendor and vendee, immediately after the sale is consummated, give clients the new set of rules so they can make informed decisions on whether or not to stay with the bank under new management?

While telling them before the sale might inadvertently cause a bank run, it seems fair to clients to be fully informed afterward about how the sale will affect them and the changes in requirements.

To start imposing penalties on people who had no idea of the changes that the sale put in effect is very unfair.

Card capture

Talking about banks, one of our editors had his ATM (automated teller machine) card captured by the machine during the long Christmas weekend just when he needed to have cash.

He was not able to get back his card until Wednesday when the bank reopened. His question is, shouldn't the bank make provisions for such eventuality? Maybe it can set up a hotline not just to report card capture but to alert someone that they have to retrieve their cards ASAP?

What if the guy had no other way to get cash? Shouldn't the bank be required to make up for the inconvenience it caused, especially during such a critical period as a long holiday break?

No such people

Another bank depositor bewails the inefficiency of one of the country's top banks. Since 2000, the bank has been sending her husband's bank statement to an office that had already closed down.

Did anybody not tell the bank's messenger that the addressee and the office itself had relocated? How can the mistake have continued for seven years?

This is not the first time that people have complained about how banks fail to take note of address changes. A month or so ago, I forwarded to another big bank a complaint from a credit cardholder.

Feedback

Carol Espiritu was very pleased at the quick and efficient way the Department of Trade and Industry handled a complaint.

"I just need to congratulate DTI for restoring my faith in government service. Last December, I endorsed a complaint of a neighbor about LBC to DTI. My neighbor thanked me because DTI [sent] her [a copy of] its letter to the COO of LBC. LBC had apologized and is setting its house in order." Furthermore, Espiritu said, "Now I'm not sorry I pay taxes!"

The Firefly Brigade, which promotes the use of bicycles to travel in Metro Manila, has won another significant victory.

"Thanks to consultative meetings between the Ayala Malls people, www.fireflybrigade.org and other pro-environment people... one can just bike to the Ayala Museum and park *sa ilalim* car park, or bike to a nearby coffee shop, or neighborhood *tiangge*, [fastfood restaurant], mall, church, or school.

Special discounts available until Feb. 25

DINING OUT

SUPER BOWL of China (tel. 7378888) offers special discounts until Feb. 25. For every P500 single receipt, a Super Bowl of China customer gets a 10-percent discount on selected Eng Bee Tin *tikoy* variants in all outlets. Super Bowl's signature dishes include Steamed Fish Fillet with Garlic, Sliced Beef with Broccoli, Szechuan Shrimp, Hakao, Crispy Noodles with Assorted Seafood, and Lemon Chicken.

TERRAZA DASMA at Robinsons Place Dasmariñas complex showcases a variety of dining outlets. A new foodie's haven in Cavite, Terraza Dasma offers a wide selection of menus and dining places. The two-level Terraza Dasma now has six food outlets: Mi Ga Korean Restaurant, Souk Kafe, Mang Inasal, D'Cowboy Barn, Show Rock Sports Bar and Restaurant, and Dencio's Bar and Grill Restaurant. Mi Ga offers authentic Korean fare while Souk is a Mediterranean coffee shop that serves freshly brewed Turkish coffee. Popular Ilonggo dish chicken *inasal* is the mainstay of Mang Inasal. Dencio's on the second level offers al fresco dining and live bands. It can also be a venue for special occasions like baptism, birthday and other events. Terraza Dasma (tel. 046-8522007, 046-8522008) is at the corner of E. Aguinaldo Highway and Governor's Drive, Palapala, Dasmariñas, Cavite.

CASA ARMAS Tapas Bar y Restaurante celebrates Mi Amor: A Spanish Celebration of Love until Feb. 28. Dishes include Ensalada del Cesar (Caesar Salad), Paella Valenciana, Chuleton Segoviano (Certified Angus Beef Steak) and Chocolate Decadence. Two complimentary glasses of Casa Cervantes Tempranillo are included in the package. The promo is available at Casa branches in 3/L Greenbelt 3, Ayala Center (tel. 7574961); 132 Jupiter St., Bel-Air Village, Makati City (tel. 8973542); The Podium, 18 ADB Ave., Ortigas Center (tel. 6873665), Mandaluyong City.

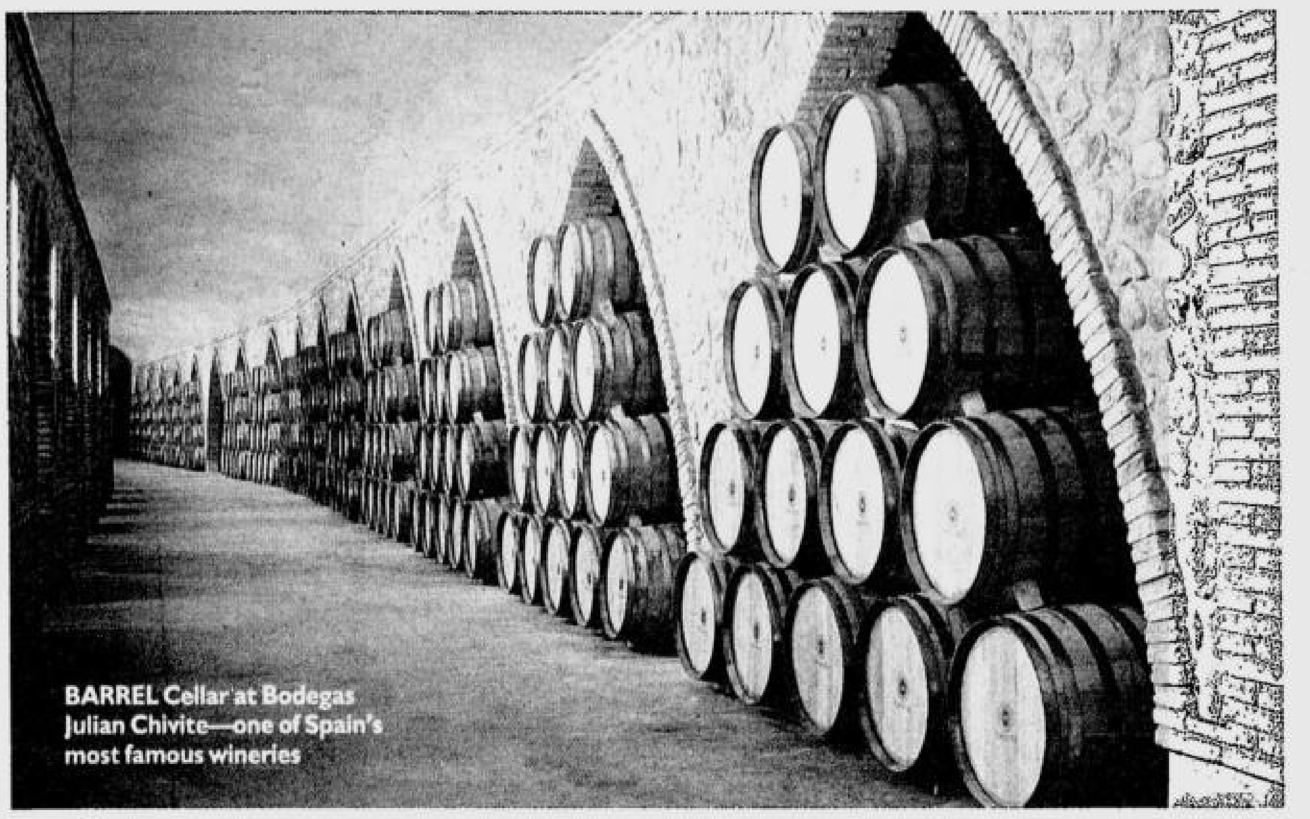
A sunset party will launch tomorrow Mojito Bay on the second level of Entertainment Hall (facing Seaside Boulevard) of the SM Mall of Asia at the Reclamation Area in Pasay City. The event will feature a make-your-own-mojito contest 4-5:30 p.m. Participants have a chance to win a trip to Boracay or Palau. From 7:30 p.m., live performances by Peacepipe, Reggae Mistress and others will be featured.

COCORAMA Pancake Island and All-day Groovy Café (6/L, Shangri-La Plaza Mall, tel. 9100401) has about 40 food selections including steak-and-eggs selections. Also available are two kinds of French toast—with stewed apples and *chai* cream sauce and the other served kebab-style with strawberries and pineapples. The Green Eggs and Spam and Chicken Chingladera are also available.

HEAVEN 'N EGGS offers Garden Salad with Shrimps and Mandarin Oranges, Grilled Salmon Lite, Grilled Tilapia Fillet Lite, Grilled Vegetables and Pesto Omelet Blanca, and Heaven's Dinner Baskets Steak Fingers 'N Calamari, and Heaven's Fish 'N Chips Basket. Omelet lovers can choose from Elvis Ham and Cheese Rock, Sinatra's Steak Omelet, Viva Las Vegas (shrimp, fish, squid and sausages) and My Sicily (Spanish sardines and pesto). Also available are US Top Blade Steak with eggs, US Rib Fingers with eggs, Country-fried Steak, Grilled Pork Chops, Tuna Steak and pancakes and waffles. Heaven 'N Eggs branches are located at CKB Building in Tomas Morato, QC (tel. 3762674); G/F Glorietta 4 (tel. 8182792), Fuente Circle in Eastwood City (tel. 9121172); and Market! Market! (tel. 8893791).

CHILI'S Molten Chocolate Cake has chocolate fudge filling and crunchy chocolate shell, topped with vanilla ice cream. Also available are Big Mouth Burgers and Baby Ribs, among others. Chili's is at Missouri cor. Nevada Sts., Northeast Greenhills (tel. 7272959); Greenbelt 1, Ayala Center, Makati (tel. 8120225); and Tomas Morato, Quezon City (tel. 37250170).

Spain, with the largest vineyard area, is second only to France in wine production



BARREL Cellar at Bodegas Julian Chivite—one of Spain's most famous wineries

KITCHEN RESCUE
Reggie Aspiras

Tasting notes from Spain

Part 2

I HAD THE MOST SPECTACULAR experience sitting through a wine-tasting session with one of our most respected wine experts/connoisseurs, Sherwin Lao. Not only was I getting education from those conducting the seminar but, with Sherwin, it was like having by my side a wine encyclopedia for a tutor.

We represented the Philippines for food and wine, respectively, in Spain's Madrid Fusion.

Today, I am gladly taking a step back and leaving you in the able hands of Dionysus himself. Here are Señor Lao's notes on Spanish wine:

- Spain has the largest vineyard area with around 1.2 million hectares devoted to wines.
- It is the second largest wine producer with over four billion liters produced; France ranks first.
- It has the fifth largest wine consumption at 1.5 billion liters. France ranks first and Italy second.

Old and New World wines

General difference

Spanish wines are considered Old World, which refers to countries that have been producing wine for centuries. Thus, European wines are Old World.

New World wines are those from countries that have been in the business only in the last century or so. The United States started wine production after the prohibition in 1935. South America only got going during the later stage of the last century. Same with Australia.

Though these countries may use century-old vines, their wines are still New World.

Old World wines carry regional names, like Bordeaux for example. This means the vineyards are demarcated as approved by the European Union. These wines are produced by traditional methods inherited and passed on to different generations for centuries. A *vigneron*, the person who tends the vineyard, relies on the *terroir* (combination of climate, soil, altitude, location and the whole micro-environment).

Due to stricter production laws, there is no human manipulation by the *vigneron*. Harvest periods are consistent and the terrain is left untouched, just as nature dictates. Hence, wines are less consistent in quality. In Old World wines, the vineyards are the stars.

New World wines are named after grape varietals since there are no designated vineyards to speak of or, if there are, they are not known and have no history. Here, the winemakers are the stars as they dictate the methods used. Products are humanly and technologically manipulated through harvest period, irrigation, even "chaptalization" (adding grape sugar to the fermentation is not allowed in regionally designated wines of Europe) and "acidification" (addition of grape acid to the blend). New World wine production entails fewer regulations, thus, the quality is more consistent (due to manipulation).

Some facts

DO wines: Spanish wine classification—Denominacion de Origen (DO)/Denominacion de Origen Calificada (Doca)

It is equivalent to the French AOC (*Appellation Origin Controlee*). Doca, the highest quality of recognition, is given only to Rioja and Priorato wines.

Vinos de Calidad con Indicacion Geografica is a transition period for *vino de la tierra* before reaching DO, normally five years.

Vino de la tierra (VT)—equivalent to the French Vin de Pay or country wine

Vino de mesa (VM)—equivalent to the French Vin de Table or table wine

Wine aging law (As monitored by the respective Consejo Regulador. It may vary from one DO to another, with the prouder regions like Rioja, Ribera del Duero and Priorat having higher minimum oak aging requirement.)

- *Joven*—young, less than six months oak aging
- *Crianza*—two years holding period, with a minimum of six months in oak barrel, then cellar-aged
- *Reserva*—three years holding period, with a minimum of one full year in oak barrel, then cellar-aged
- *Gran reserva*—five years holding period, with a minimum of two full years in oak barrel, then cellar-aged

Spanish wine labels

Non-DO wine and DO Wine, with DO a sign of quality

Key Spanish grapes

White:

- Macabeo, aka Viura—grape used in Rioja Blanco. One of three mainstay grapes of Cava (the other two being Xarello and Parellada)
- Verdejo—another incredible white varietal, a Rueda DO wine mainstay
- Albarino—Galician, arguably one of the best white varietals, used in Rias Baixas wines
- Palomino—Andalucian, primarily in Jerez; makes the famous sherry because of its unique "*flor*"

Red:

- Tempranillo—known also as Cencibel, Tinto del Pais, Ull de Llebre, and Tinto Fino; truly and proudly Spanish; already being planted all over the New World, from Australia to California
- Garnacha—known as Grenache in France, an unbelievable wine in Priorato
- Graciano—often mixed with Tempranillo in the La Rioja region to add complexity to wine
- Mazuelo—known also as Carinena, a dark wine that compliments the Rioja blend, and also used in many places, especially in Catalonia

Next week, a detailed wine-tasting course with wine master Sherwin Lao using the 2S3T approach. For private wine seminars, e-mail protegeinc@yahoo.com. What an experience it will be!

My new class schedules are out including the summer module for kids. Plus, I am doing a "bring a friend" summer treat for my gourmet Cucinera 1 series.

Call 9289296 or 9273008.

E-mail the author at raspiras@inquirer.com.ph

Expanded menu for health bar

THUMB
Chef Salad

FRUIT MAGIC, THE HEALTH juice bar, has expanded its menu that features healthy wraps, sandwiches, pasta, salad and pastry deserts.

Diners looking for a quick snack can try the tortilla wraps, in such flavors as roast beef, ranch grilled and tuna salad.

Fruit Magic sandwich selection includes grilled chicken Caesar, grilled Mediterranean veggies medley, crab and cucumber salad in wasabi aioli, chicken salad, tuna salad, grilled ham and cheese, tuna melt, and grilled cheese sandwich.

Pasta lovers can choose from Spicy Sausage fra Diablo, Pesto Verdi, Creamy Chicken and Broccoli, Chicken Florentine, Chicken Cacciatore, Putanesca, Bolognese, Chicken Mushroom, Carbonara, season's best Garden Sauce, Country Sausage, Tomato Basil and Tomato Beefy Sauce.

Also available are tri-salad selections like Chicken Caesar Salad made from grilled skinless chicken breasts marinated in olive oil and selected herbs, and the traditional Caesar Salad and Chef's Salad.

For sweets, diners can try oatmeal cookies, banana slice, date maple bar and soy oatmeal cookies that are sugar-free, fiber-rich and chewy.

New Fruit Magic (tel. 3646927 or 3643621; fax 3662934; www.fruitmagic.com.ph) stores now have more vibrant colors and graphics to enhance the dining experience for its customers.

Chain serves exotic brew

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Local farmers gather the beans, then wash and roast them.

When roasted, the Civet Coffee has a sweet, chocolate-y aroma. An Australian coffee roast master has compared its unique flavor to fermented plums and dark chocolate with hazelnuts.

Due to limited supply, the Civet Coffee is available only in selected branches of Bo's Coffee.

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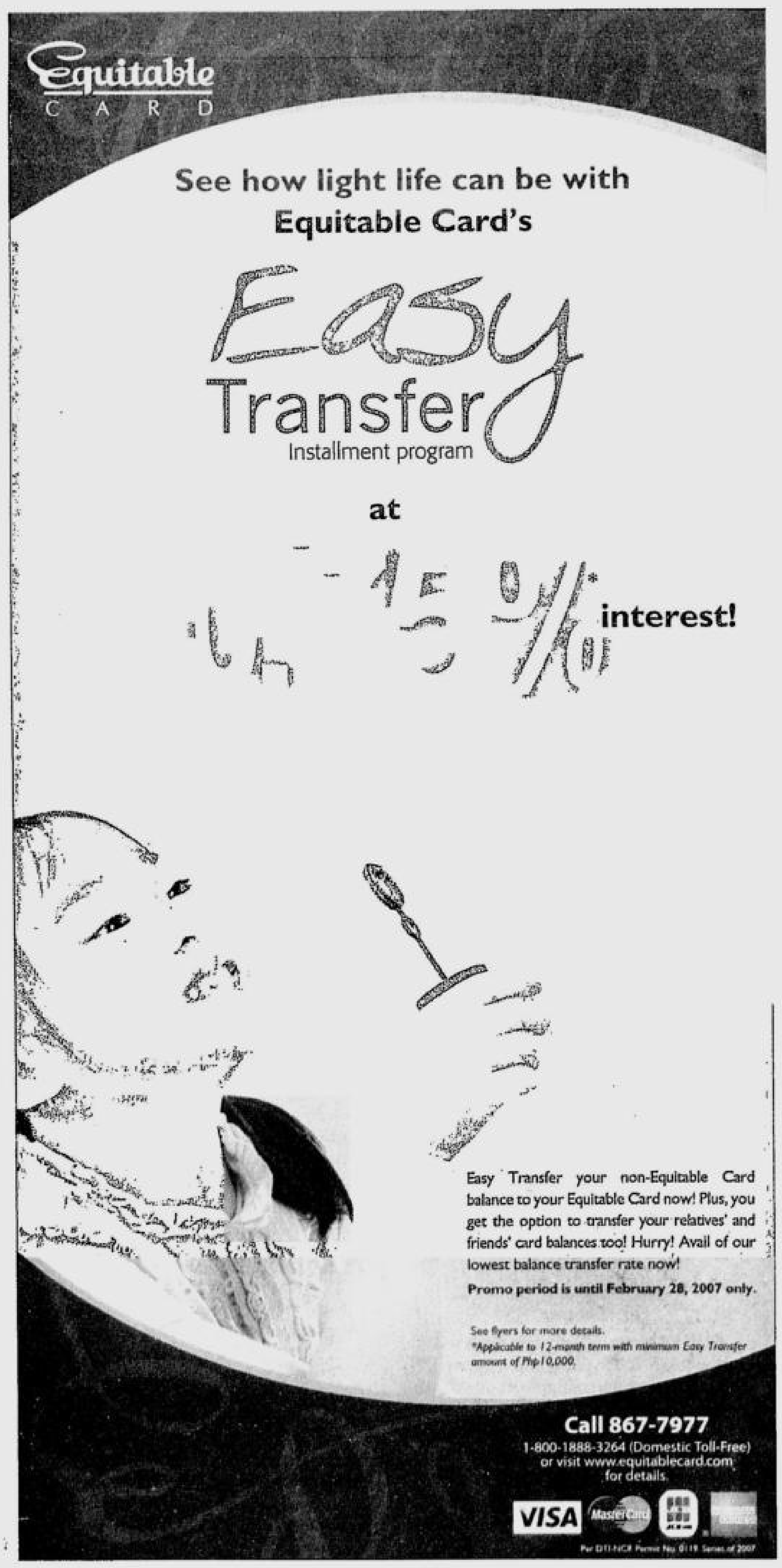

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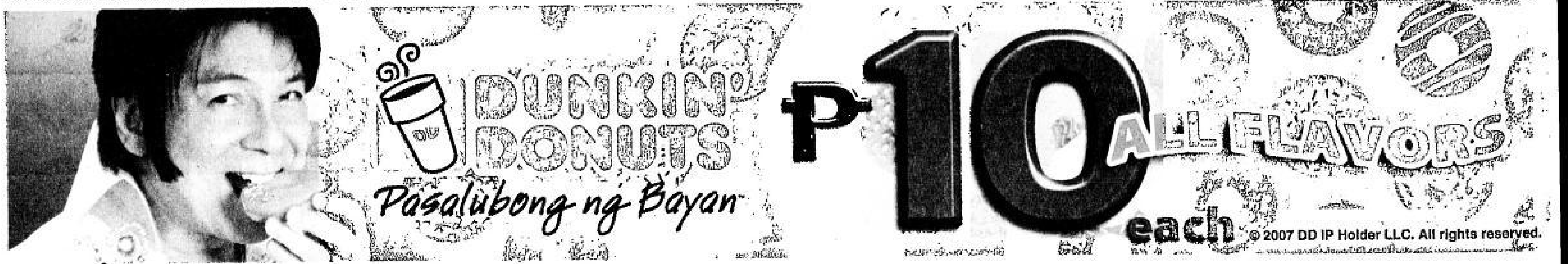

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Family comes first

By Nini Valera

Her husband says Lani Misalucha will gladly drop her Vegas stints to settle in New York

ROGER CARPIO

LANI MISALUCHA would give up her singing stints in Las Vegas for her husband Noli's career.

This was according to Noli himself, an information technology specialist who has put up his own business in the US. "Our decision to migrate was for the sake of the family, not for her career," Noli told INQUIRER Entertainment on Monday during a press conference for Lani's new album, released by Universal Records.

The singer is in Manila to promote the album, "Lani Misalucha," and to stage a concert at Araneta Coliseum.

"Should I get a good offer to work in New York, Lani would drop her singing and we would move there," Noli said. Lani did not even want to sing when they arrived in the US in 2004, he added. But it was because of Lani's singing that the family obtained legal status in the US. They have two daughters—Louvene, 16, and Lian, 14.

"We had gone there as tourists," Noli said. "It was difficult to get working visas. Our [immigration] lawyer told us it would be easier if Lani were to work as an entertainer."

He pointed out that, long before Lani hit it big in the Philippines, he had wanted to migrate to give his family a better future. "I just got fed up doing business here," he said. He revealed that shortly before they left, he had lost millions in a business deal gone awry.

"At first, we planned to go to Canada," Noli recalled. "But a friend called and asked us to come to Las Vegas and look around."

Since August 2004, Lani has done Vegas, first at Bally's Hotel and Casino, and currently at Flamingo Hotel, right on the famous Strip. She performs with the Society of 7. During this month-long Manila break, American Idol finalist Jasmine Trias would pinch hit for her.

But Lani, 37, insisted she was not living the American dream. "I have been asked that question so many times, she said. "I can't [even] say I am living my dream. I never planned on being a singer, anyway. [In a way] I am just like all the Filipino doctors and nurses who go abroad for work. I just want a better life for my family."

The singer barely had time to talk intimately with entertainment writers. However, she did get to explain to INQUIRER Entertainment why she decided to join ABS-CBN instead of returning to GMA 7, her former home studio.

"ABS-CBN was the preference of Crossover (FM radio station, the concert promoter) and Universal," she said. "ABS CBN has a wider reach. I won't deny that it influenced my decision."

She clarified that she had earlier informed GMA 7 executives about her move. But she said the information was apparently not transmitted to her former fellow singers on "SOP," the network's Sunday noontime variety show. "I did talk to Regine (Velasquez) today, but I still have to talk to the others, like Jaya, Ogie and Janno."

Earlier, Velasquez told the INQUIRER that she was saddened by Lani's decision.

DISCOVER THE NEW DIVA OF LAS VEGAS
LANI MISALUCHA
TOGETHER WITH
Society Of Seven
BALLY'S

POSTER of the Bally's gig, with the Society of Seven

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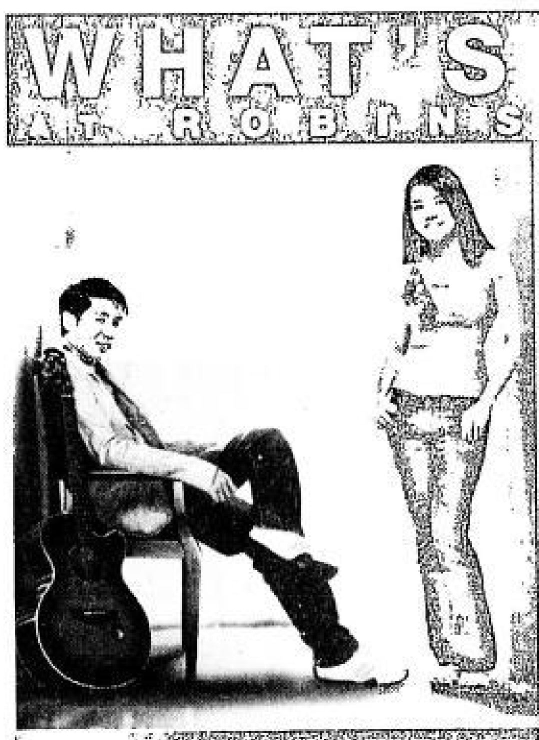

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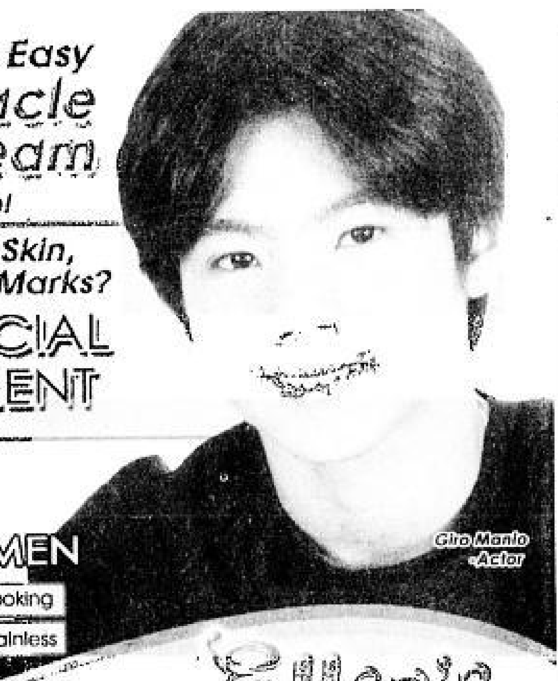
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What this Big Sister wants

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

LAURENTI DYOGI, DIRECTOR of the ABS-CBN reality show "Pinoy Big Brother," calls Dutch creative consultant Anuska Ban "Big Sister."

Did Big Sister give final approval for the 14 housemates of PBB Season Two, which will be launched this Sunday?

"She has a big say," Dyogi quipped.

"It's decided by a team," Ban was quick to interject.

Ban's opinions are highly regarded in the PBB house on Eugenio Lopez Drive. After all, she has worked for 17 years as production and technical support consultant in Endemol, the Dutch company behind the Big Brother franchise, and has set up BB shows in 32 countries, including the Philippines, Argentina and Brazil.

"She brings a different perspective [to the show]," Dyogi said of Ban. "She's very objective. If we had to pick from among three people, she could spot the one that would not mix well with the others."

In casting this second season, Dyogi again relied on Ban's "fresh eyes."

"We presented more than 20 people to her," he related.

Normal people

What was Big Sister looking for?

"We were searching for normal people," Ban pointed out. "Someone who can be your neighbor."

She revealed that the PBB team has learned from previous mistakes.

"In other countries, they chose housemates with extreme personalities," Ban said. The cast was dominated by tattooed rebels or sexy exhibitionists. "It didn't work. It was too much."

Anuska Ban, 'Pinoy Big Brother' consultant, can spot ideal housemates

There are no hard-and-fast rules in the reality biz. Ban and Dyogi subscribe to a standard formula.

"We aim for a right mixture of different characters," Ban explained. "We want not only leaders, but also followers. Extroverts, along with introverts. If we had only introverts, that would be a very boring show."

Ban doesn't believe that only flashy, take-charge types excel in reality shows, however.

"In other countries, the extroverts didn't emerge as winners," she noted.

One need not look far. "In PBB's first season, Nene [Tamayo] won, even though she hardly talked in the beginning," Dyogi recounted. "It's all gut feel."

He added that prospective housemates should have more to offer than just great looks and hot bods. "We want people with good background stories," he said.

"If you don't have any life experience, Big Brother wouldn't find you interesting," Ban affirmed. "Remember, they should keep televiewers watching for 133 days."

When she heard the stories of this season's housemates during the audition process, Ban gasped: "They made me cry buckets."

"The second season is full of surprises," Dyogi promised.

Reinvention

Ban noticed that the house loooked "different, completely renovated." That is the secret of the BB franchise, she said—constant reinvention. "The reality show genre can reach saturation point due to overexposure," she conceded.

One difference in the second season is the inclusion of Pinoys raised abroad. (In season one, only Filipino-American Sam Milby and Israeli-born Uma Khouny are from abroad.)

"[In casting this season,] Laurenti traveled all over the world," Ban said.

Dyogi recounted that he had to take additional trips because some of the housemates they had chosen six months earlier backed out. "Six months could make a lot of difference," Dyogi explained. "A lot of things could've happened [in the interim]. Some couldn't get out of their jobs anymore. Some had to fulfill existing contracts. Some had life-changing experiences."

Overall, it was a stressful, globetrotting search for Dyogi. Ban exclaimed, "That's because you find Filipinos in every corner of the world!"

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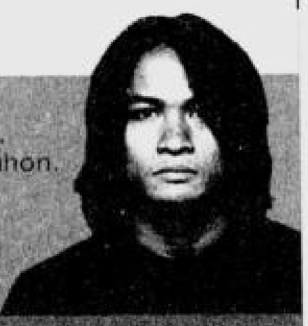

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4 EPIC MOVIE
5 NUMBER 23
6 THE PROMISE
7 MUSIC AND LYRICS
8 THE MESSENGER

SM CITY CLARK (045)625-5844-45
1 MUSIC AND LYRICS
2 GHOST RIDER
3 ARTHUR AND THE INVISIBLES
4 BABEL
5 THE PROMISE
6 FACES OF LOVE

SM CITY MARILAO (044)9332013-17
1 GHOST RIDER
2 THE PROMISE
3 BLOOD AND CHOCOLATE
4 CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER

LUZON

SM CITY BATANGAS 885-6401-04
1 THE MESSENGER
2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3 THE PROMISE
4 TENACIOUS D

SM CITY PAMPANGA (045)9637681-85
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2 BABEL
3 THE MESSENGER
4 BLOOD AND CHOCOLATE
5 FACES OF LOVE
6 THE PROMISE

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2 THE PROMISE
3 ARTHUR AND THE INVISIBLES
4 CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER

SM SUPERCENTER MOLINO (046)474-3160
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3 EPIC MOVIE
4 CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER

SM CITY STA. ROSA (049)5349811
1 THE HOLIDAY
2 GHOST RIDER
3 THE PROMISE
4 EPIC MOVIE

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2 GHOST RIDER
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6 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
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8 BLOOD AND CHOCOLATE

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2 RESERVED
3 ARTHUR AND THE INVISIBLES
4 THE PROMISE
5 GHOST RIDER
6 CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER
7 RESERVED
8 THE MESSENGER

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4 THE HOLIDAY
5 THE CLEANER
6 CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER

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2 THE PROMISE
3 CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER
4 BABEL

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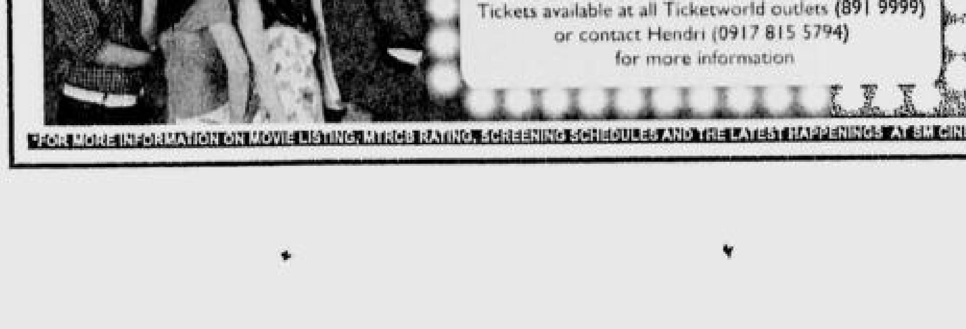
EVENT CALENDAR



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Separate

REMINDER TO ENTERTAINMENT writers: Today's interviewees may be tomorrow's mayors, congressmen and senators.

* * *

BRITNEY Spears wears a wig on a night out, above, to hide her new look, top. PHOTO COURTESY OF DAILY

Act of defiance

LOS ANGELES—A DEFIANT BRITney Spears shaved her head at a hair salon after the owner refused to take part in the pop star's latest makeover.

The Friday visit to Esther's Haircutting Studio here was followed by a trip to a tattoo parlor where the 25-year-old mother of two added two designs to her body.

All these happened on the same day entertainment media reported that Spears had entered a rehab center in the Caribbean island of Antigua. Spears' camp denied this.

Salon owner Esther Tognozzi said she was afraid to shave Spears' head and then get sued for ruining the singer's image.

She recalled that, after she said Spears was maybe being "hormonal" and would feel differently the next day, the singer "grabbed the buzzer and started buzzing her own hair off. ... I just cleaned it up when she was done."

An enterprising person in Pennsylvania was soon selling 10 lots of the purported locks on eBay at $50 per lot. *Reuters*

Separate beds

Janno Gibbs has broken his silence about a rumored affair with comedian Gladys Guevarra.

"Of course it's not true," Gibbs, one of the hosts of "Eat Bulaga" and "SOP Concert TV" told INQUIRER Entertainment. He decided not to talk about Guevarra and her resignation from "Eat," he said, because she was already doing the talking.

But he said they were still friends.

Meanwhile, Gibbs admitted that he and wife Bing Loyzaga were sleeping in separate bedrooms. "She sleeps with the kids," he explained.

He denied that Loyzaga had filed for annulment. "We're working to save our marriage," Gibbs said. "We're still husband and wife, living in the same house. I'm happy about where it's at right now." *Nini Valera*

GMA 7's blockbuster

Got this text from a GMA exec: "First-day gross for 'The Promise'" (GMA Films' Valentine presentation) starring Angel Locsin and Richard Gutierrez was P10,646,821.20." The message said it was the company's highest-grossing Valentine movie ever.

* * *

OBSERVATION: Stars used to be known for their movies or record albums ... now it's for their product endorsements.

bedrooms and an act of defiance

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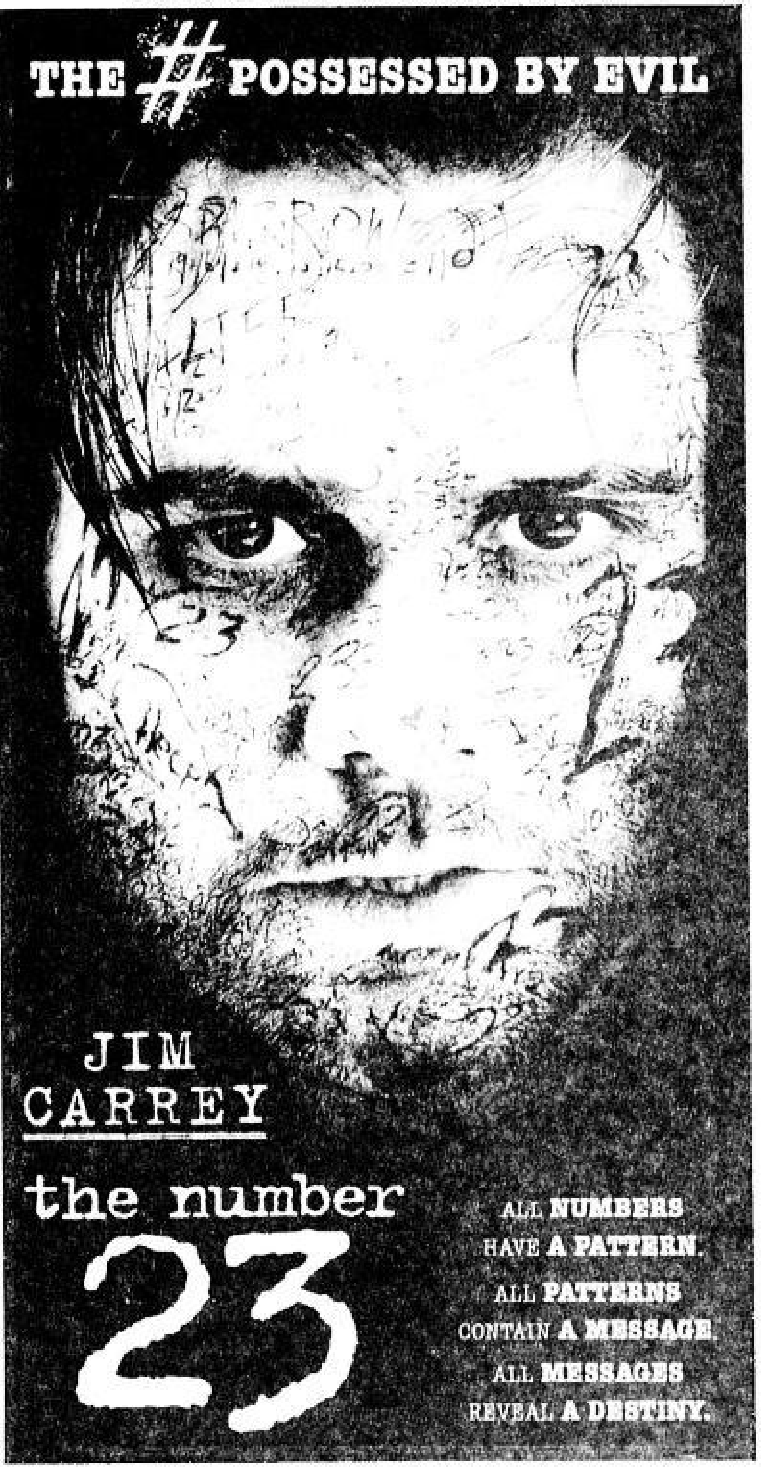
THE # POSSESSED BY EVIL
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the number 23
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GHOST RIDER **PG13** 2:45,5:15,7:45,10:15	**BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA** **G** 1:45,3:55,6:05,8:15	**EPIC MOVIE** **R13** 1:25,3:40,5:55, 8:10,10:25
THE NUMBER 23 **R13** 1:45,3:55,6:05, 8:15,10:25	**THE HOLIDAY** **PG13** 1:20,4:10,7:00,9:50	**MUSIC AND LYRICS** **PG13** 12:50,3:15,5:40, 8:05,10:30

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2	MUSIC AND LYRICS	11:45 , 2:25 , 5:00 7:35 , 10:10	PG-13

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Cinema	Movie	Times	Rating
3	BRIDGE OF TARABITHIA	11:45 , 2:05 , 4:20 6:35 , 9:00	GP
4	EPIC MOVIE	10:40 , 12:55 , 3:10 5:25 , 7:40 , 10:00	R-13
5	GHOST RIDER	10:45 , 1:40 , 4:30 7:20 , 10:10	PG-13

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MUSIC MUSEUM

March 08 , 2007	EDNA LEDESMA	8:00 PM
	" DANCING W/ THE CHAMPIONS "	
March 18 & 23 , 2007	SITTI . . IN LOVE	8:30 PM
March 30 , 2007	[illegible]	8:00 PM

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For inquiries, call:
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GUARANTEED SEATS

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Cinema	Movie	Times	Rating
1	EPIC MOVIE	1:20, 3:45, 6:10, 8:35, 11:00	R-13
2	GHOST RIDER	12:20, 2:55, 5:40, 8:25, 11:05	PG-13
3	THE NUMBER 23	1:40, 4:00, 6:20, 8:40, 11:00	R -13
4	BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA	1:20, 3:45, 6:10, 8:35, 11:00	G

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FACES OF LOVE
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THX

Cinema				
G1 GLORIETTA 1	1 NUMBER 23	2 GHOST RIDER	3 BRIDGE OF TERABITHIA	4 THE PROMISE
G4 GLORIETTA 4	1 NUMBER 23	2 MUSIC & LYRICS	3 THX GHOST RIDER GUARANTEED SEATS	
	4 FACES OF LOVE	5 BRIDGE OF TERABITHIA	6 EPIC MOVIE	7 THE LAST KING OF SCOTLAND
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 EPIC MOVIE	2 NUMBER 23		
GB3 GREENBELT 3	1 THX EPIC MOVIE GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX NUMBER 23 GUARANTEED SEATS		
	3 THE LAST KING OF SCOTLAND GUARANTEED SEATS	4 MUSIC & LYRICS GUARANTEED SEATS	5 GHOST RIDER GUARANTEED SEATS	
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX NUMBER 23 GUARANTEED SEATS	2 BRIDGE OF TERABITHIA		
	3 EPIC MOVIE	4 MUSIC & LYRICS	5 GHOST RIDER	
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 GHOST RIDER	2 MUSIC & LYRICS	3 CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER	4 BLOOD & CHOCOLATE
M2 MARKET! MARKET!	1 THE PROMISE	2 BRIDGE OF TERABITHIA		
	3 EPIC MOVIE	4 GHOST RIDER	5 NUMBER 23	

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Customer Service Numbers Glorietta - 752 7272; from 10am to 9pm
Greenbelt - 757 4853; from 11am to 9pm
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Ayala Center Cebu - (032) 231 5342 loc 324
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BONIFACIO HIGH STREET February 16, 2007 9th Avenue 8pm	GREENBELT February 22, 2007 Greenbelt 3 Park 8pm

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Casting Cinemalaya

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

THE CINEMALAYA FOUNDATION INC. recently unveiled the 10 finalists for the full-length feature section of the digital film festival, now on its third year.

Laurice Guillen, film fest competition director, told INQUIRER Entertainment that casting was ongoing for the 10 Cinemalaya entries.

Veteran stars, as well as newcomers, are being signed up for the competing movies, according to the filmmakers.

Sampaguita star Barbara Perez stages a comeback in "Gulong" by Jeanne Lim and Socorro Fernandez.

Perez, who shares the screen with real-life husband Robert Arevalo in "Gulong," is tackling the role of Tita Maggie, an elderly lady who owns a 40-year-old bicycle coveted by a boy named Apao and his bosom buddies Momoy and Tom-Tom.

"Going Bulilit" child stars are being eyed for the pivotal roles of the three boys. Gardo Versoza plays Arevalo's son.

Dennis Marasigan's "Tukso," which recounts the "Rashomon"-like investigation into the death of a barrio maiden, features mainstream and indie actors.

Marasigan told INQUIRER Entertainment that he had cast Ricky Davao, Carlo Aquino, Ping Medina, Shamaine Buencamino, Soliman Cruz, Diana Malahay, Mailes Kanapi and his wife Irma Adlawan in key roles.

In jest, Marasigan told the other directors: "You can hire Irma. She's not an exclusive talent of mine!"

Davao has another entry in the fest—Ed Lejano's "Sinungaling na Buwan," which follows the travails of three city folks betrayed by their lovers.

Davao's costars in this movie billed as a "tribute to Ishmael Bernal" are Liza Diño (of "Compound") and JR Valentin (of "Ang Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros").

JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

BARBARA Perez and Robert Arevalo

Other entries, like "Ligaw Liham" and "Still Life," are tapping theater actors.

Set in a small Negros town, "Liham" features Visayan theater actors, according to director Jay Abello.

"Still Life" director Katrina Flores has found her lead character (a painter afflicted with a paralyzing disease) in stage actor Roy Capinding, but is still searching for the woman who will act as catalyst in the hero's "journey of hope."

"Tribu" director Jim Libiran who is setting his film in Tondo, is looking for actors who actually grew up in the area.

"For the prudent management of resources, I've decided to cast real-life gang members," Libiran said. "I've even discovered a Tondo resident who [looks like] a young Tetchie Agbayani." He is also eyeing real-life Tondo girls Myrna Castillo and Amy Austria and former sexy star Maureen Mauricio.

Adolfo Alix Jr. envisions an all-Ivatan cast for "Kadin (The Goat)," set entirely in Batanes.

The other entries, like Jade Castro's "Endo" and James Arnold Ladioray's "2,999," are still in the process of casting.

Castro has picked Jason Abalos and Ina Feleo as the young couple in "Endo" or "end of contract."

Lastly, Auraeus Solito's "Pisay," which focuses on Philippine High School students on the eve of the first Edsa revolution, held an audition for young actors ages 13 to 19 recently, according to scriptwriter Henry Grageda.

Same airline, different flights

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Anne Carvajal

US fans snubbed by Vic & Pia

A PREVIOUS ITEM HERE, ABOUT SEN. **Bong Revilla** being spotted with a rumored ex, beauty queen **Josephine Canonizado**, elicited ambivalent reactions, so much so that some people supplied some missing links.

I stand corrected. They didn't take the same flight to Hong Kong. They just flew via the same airline.

Flight records show that on Feb. 9, Bong took the PR 300 flight at 8:10 a.m.; Josephine was on PR 318, which left at 10:05 a.m.

Media colleagues en route to Thailand (names withheld upon request) bumped into them at the airport but chose not to write about it.

I texted Bong's sister, **Andeng**, for a comment. She requested that I drop the issue altogether. On TV last Sunday, Bong said it wasn't true. Earlier, his wife **Lani (Mercado)** downplayed the matter by making a joke out of it during their Zirkoh show last Friday.

Why do rumors about Bong and Josephine persist? Just wondering.

Tipsy Kurdi

Yasmien Kurdi created a scene in Jordan's Bar & Grille (Kamuning) last Saturday. Apparently, she had a few drinks too many. She kept shouting, "*Wala akong pakialam! Kumanta tayo!*" As a seasoned bar-hopper, my unsolicited advice to Yas is, "Girl, it's okay to consume alcohol; just don't let it consume you!"

Mob snob?

A lot of readers from the US e-mailed me about "unpleasant" encounters with **Pia Guanio** and **Vic Sotto**. Here are some of them:

From jingtupas@yahoo.com: "We ran into Pia Guanio and Vic Sotto in downtown San Francisco last Feb. 14. As fans, we were eager to have our pics taken with them. Sad to say, they snubbed us. No smile or any show of interest from them."

From Susanc@barbizonmodeling.org: "I like Pia G's sweet face and I enjoy Vic Sotto's antics. But I got disgusted when they gave us an 'attitude' when they were here in San Fo. We just wanted to have a quick shot with them but Pia hollered for a cab immediately. They didn't even bother to say hi to us!"

I texted Pia about this. Her reply: "You cannot imagine the number of people we had our pics taken with. Sadly we don't get e-mail about that. Vic and I regret the incidents. We are sorry if we offended them. We both really try our best to acquiesce to people's requests."

Bossing and Pia are two of the most loved people in the industry. Perhaps their fans just caught them in a bad mood. Although they have the right to feel hurt, fans must understand that their idols are humans, too. As artists, they are prone to mood swings. Maybe fans should not put stars on a pedestal that's too high so they won't get disappointed when their idols fail them.

Hero worship easily turns into zero worship that way.

'Dreamgirls'

I immensely enjoyed watching "Dreamgirls." The songs are so powerful, I could still hear them ringing in my ears long after the movie was over.

The soundtrack, released by Sony BMG, includes performances by **Beyonce**, **Jamie Foxx**, **Eddie Murphy** and **Jennifer Hudson**. Sing along as you dream on!

Anvil Awards

The Public Relations Society of the Philippines honors the best PR tools and programs of 2006 at the 42nd Anvil Awards tomorrow, 6:30 p.m. at the Grand Ballroom of Hotel Intercon Makati. Interested parties may call 6380011. Celebrate good PR that abounds here in the P.I.

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2 GHOST RIDER
3 BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA

Center Mall Cinema
Baguio Center Mall, Magsaysay Avenue (Baguio City) tel (074)- (4440348)
1 GHOST RIDER
2 APOCALYPTO

Jade Cinema
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1 CODNAME CLEANER
2 GHOST RIDER
3 THE PROMISE
4 BABEL

CINEMA 2000
Cinema 2000 Waltermart Makati
Waltermart Center, Chino Roces Ave. cor. Antonio Arnaiz Pio del Pilar, Makati City
Tel 816.4214 / 816.4216
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2 BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA
3 THE PROMISE
4 EPIC MOVIE

Centre Plaza Cinema
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2 DÉJÀ VU

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3 THE PROMISE
4 GHOST RIDER
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2 THE MESSENGERS
3 THE PROMISE

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8 FACES OF LOVE
9 THE MESSENGERS
10 THE PROMISE

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2 THE PROMISE
3 THE MESSENGER

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Gapan) tel. (044) 4867736
1 THE MESSENGER
2 THE PROMISE

Lianas Cinema
(Pasig) tel 640.4748
1 HANNIBAL RISING
2 APOCALYPTO

Blue Wave
Sumulong Highway cor. Mayor Gil Fernando Street, Sta. Niño, Marikina City tel. 9341927
1 (DOLBY) THE PROMISE
2 (DOLBY) GHOST RIDER
3 (DOLBY) EPIC MOVIE
4 (DOLBY) RESERVED

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2 LIGAYA KATUMBAS AY BUHAY
3 TROIKA
4 HANNIBAL RISING

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2 KAKAIBANG KARISMA
3 THE PROMISE
4 LITTLE CHILDREN
5 GHOST RIDER

SUPER CINERAMA
Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto tel 7334228
1 EPIC MOVIE
2 GHOST RIDER
3 THE PROMISE
4 BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA
5 NUMBER 23

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2 APOCALYPTO
3 THE MESSENGER
4 THE PROMISE

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2 HANNIBAL RISING
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1 TROIKA
2 HANNIBAL RISING

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SHANG CINEPLEX
1 BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA
SUBJECT TO MTRCB RATING
12:20, 2:45, 5:10, 7:35, 10:00
2 GHOST RIDER
MTRCB PG-13
1:45, 4:30, 7:15, 10:00
3 EPIC MOVIE
MTRCB R-13
12:20, 2:45, 5:10, 7:35, 10:00
4 THE NUMBER 23
MTRCB R-13
12:40, 3:00, 5:20, 7:40, 10:00
PREMIERE THEATRE
MUSIC AND LYRICS
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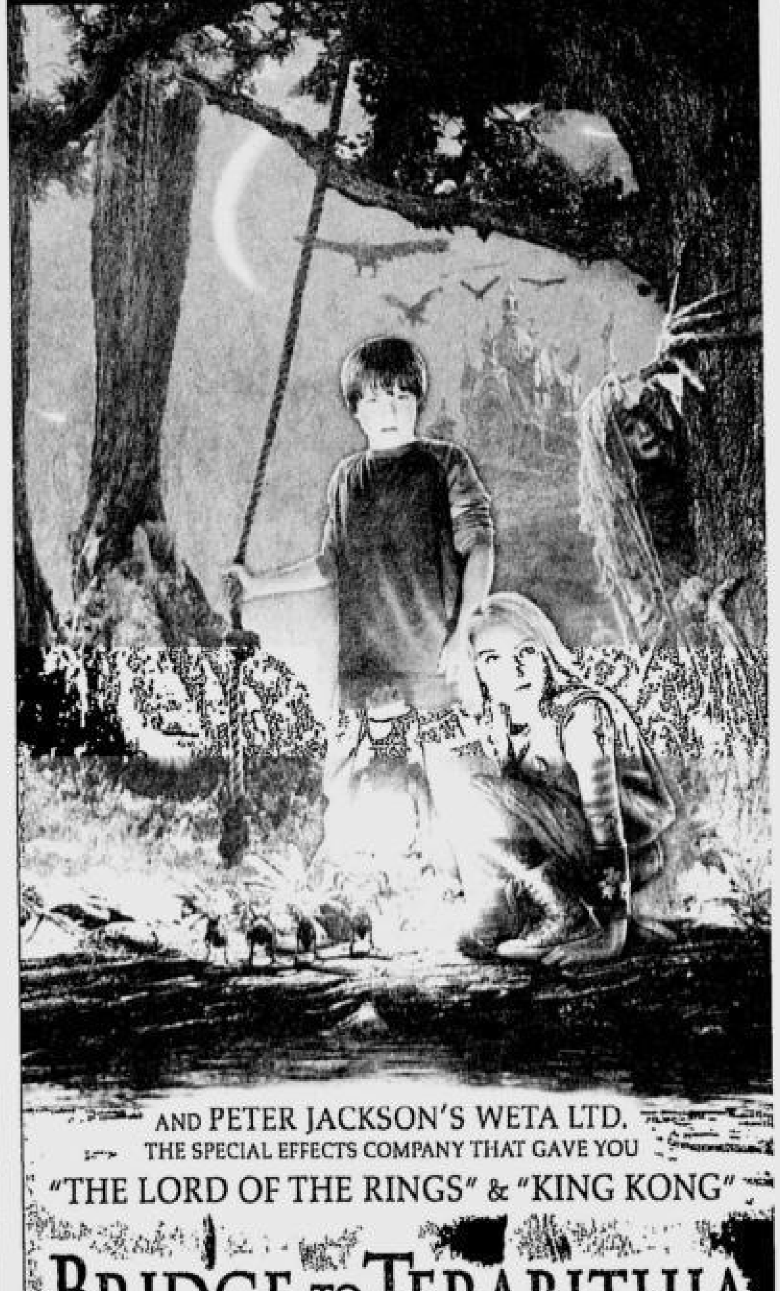

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"THE LORD OF THE RINGS" & "KING KONG"
BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA

MTRCB ▶ R-13 | STRICTLY FOR 13 YEARS OF AGE AND ABOVE
We Know It's Big. We Measured.
EPIC MOVIE
NOW SHOWING

ARANETA CENTER
Gateway Alimall FarmersPlaza
THE ONLY CINEPLEX IN THE COUNTRY
Gateway Cineplex 10
DOLBY DIGITAL-EX

EPIC MOVIE 1:30 / 3:30 / 5:30 / 7:30 / 9:40	NUMBER 23 11:50 / 2:15 / 4:40 / 7:05 / 9:30	FACES OF LOVE 1:35 / 3:35 / 5:35 / 7:35 / 9:35	Globe PLATINUM CINEMA
ASK THE DUST 1:30 / 4:00 / 6:30 / 9:00	BRIDGE OF TERABITHIA 12:30 / 2:45 / 5:00 / 7:15 / 9:30	GHOST RIDER 12:10 / 2:35 / 5:00 / 7:25 / 9:50	
MUSIC & LYRICS 1:05 / 3:15 / 5:25 / 7:35 / 9:45	THE PROMISE 12:20 / 2:40 / 5:00 / 7:20 / 9:40	THE MESSENGERS 12:10 / 4:55 / 9:40 THE HOLIDAY 2:05 / 6:50	NUMBER 23 1:40 / 4:05 / 6:30 / 8:55

Alimall 5

1	EPIC MOVIE 12:30 / 2:30 / 4:30 / 6:30 / 8:30	2	GHOST RIDER 1:20 / 3:45 / 6:10 / 8:35	3	NUMBER 23 1:05 / 3:30 / 5:55 / 8:20
4	THE PROMISE 12:10 R4 / 1:30 / 3:50 / 6:10 / 8:30	5	BRIDGE OF TERABITHIA 12:05 R4 / 1:20 / 3:35 / 5:50 / 8:05		DOLBY DIGITAL dts SDDS

For ticket inquiries, please call TicketNet at 911-5555 or log on to www.ticketnet.com.ph
ARANETA COLISEUM
VINA MORALES "SHOWGIRL" THE REPEAT
February 24. Saturday, 8 pm
Bb. PILIPINAS CORONATION NIGHT
March 3. Saturday, 8pm